

# IRIS MACFARLANE

## RETURN TO INDIA - 1939-1947



Darling one,  
Kamley Hospital.  
April 20th 1942

Two letters from you which cheered me up no end. I'm still very disappointed about your leave but it seems my jolly old appendix have got to come out with a bit of it perhaps. Just as well you aren't here now to see me go through another nasty phase.

When darling, you must postpone leave till after the operation unless you think there is any doubt of getting it later. I'm sending you a wire today to let you know in case you suddenly decide to come. I'll send you another after the operation a possibly another like saying I'm going to be operated on in case you can get compassionate leave! So don't get flustered - it won't mean two operations. Do you follow? If you think that leave will be stopped later then take it now - otherwise wait.

Hospital  
16.9.42

My dear darling,

Well darling you seem to have been through the mill and are proper. I received a form yesterday saying you were dangerously ill. I am afraid I got rather worried and sent a nasty note which now I think is unnecessary because in emergency I found that it was merely a matter of time when I'm sure you were. They seemed to have waited so long with you. Why? I wish to be with you now anyway only a few weeks and all will be well. I am feeling perfectly fit and am waiting for the nurse to come and cut my stitches and then I am allowed to try and regain my equilibrium. No more back I am afraid. Still every day brings me closer to my objective.

Mindy & Doug (they came in to see me yesterday and feel very fed up with things generally. Every body seems the same

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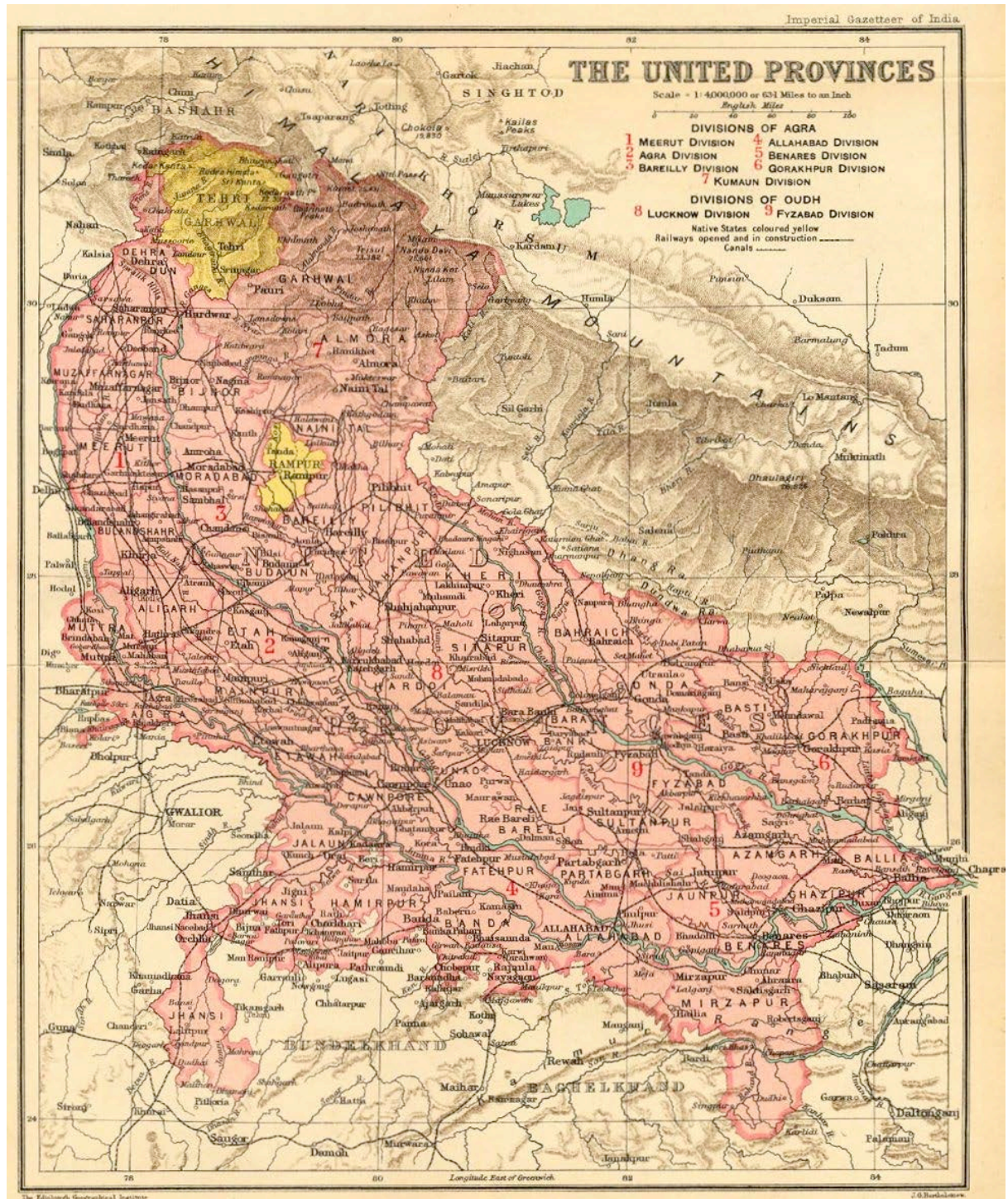
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note: Much of the transcribing was done by Pam Turbett





The United Provinces in 1909. Bareilly and Naini Tal are located near the yellow province, middle left.



# 1 THE PASSAGE BACK



Iris on the boat to India in 1939, aged sixteen

## Account in 'Daughters of the Empire'

So on an April day in 1939 we walked up the gangway of the boat that was to Take Me Out, as my mother had been taken twenty years before, as my own daughters would be taken twenty years ahead. All those headmistresses and aunts had led to this moment, as inevitable as it was frightening. For I remember being very frightened indeed at the prospect of having to play tennis and go to Tea Dances. I had got over some of the self-consciousness over my leg, but not all. I was sixteen and a half, and I thought it would be a long time, if ever, before an old, isolated I.C.S. man would have me.

We travelled Tourist Class which was odd, since my father was a Colonel by now and tourists were usually Tommies and Anglo Indians and very young Box Wallahs on their first tours. I hated the gangway from the First Class deck which brought down every evening a very pretty girl to dance with Roy, a medical student who made do with me till she arrived. Leaving them waltzing round the potted palms, I went out on deck and quoted Matthew Arnold: "Weary of myself and sick of asking, What I am and what I ought to be, At the vessels prow I stand which bears me Forward, forward over the restless sea." I wore a different dress nearly every night, but whether in chintz or green moons Roy dropped me like a hot coal as soon as Deirdre from First Class appeared.



Apart from Roy my only contact with a man was with a tea planter called Graham who showed me pictures of his estate, of monkeys and little bears, or so he told me because it was hard to tell from the underdeveloped prints. Little did I know that my life was to be spent in such a place, caring for similar creatures. My mother said Graham was dark and couldn't I find someone better to be friends with. She spent the voyage playing bridge, but sent me out every evening to dance and have fun. I didn't tell her that I spent most of the throbbing seductive hours with my chin on the ship's rail waiting for a non-appearing Roy.

Arriving in India then and always was dazzling and familiar. The smell of burnt gram and open drains, of sweat and spices, was carried in a warm breeze. The noise was deafening, the crowds jostled and shrieked, but in the days of Empire we white women had paths cleared for us and my mother's dalmatians. By that time she was a keen dog breeder and took out good specimens; hard for the dogs who slithered round the decks trying to find somewhere to relieve themselves; not particularly helpful in a country with millions of half-starved strays already.

We took a train up India for two days and nights. Of course we had a carriage to ourselves, and in the evenings unrolled our "bisters", canvas sausages that held our bedding, with pockets at each end for towels and a chamber pot. The dust rolled in clouds through the open windows and the studded leather seats grew slimy under our sweating thighs. At stations men handed in trays with teapots, and plates of bread covered with rancid butter, and little green bananas. Sunrises and sunsets were spectacular, and in my sticky corner I watched pass the country so long awaited, and wished never to arrive at the destination with dances and tennis courts.

The last stretch up into the Himalayas was in a taxi, round hairpin bends with dramatic dizzying drops, the air becoming cooler at each turn. My father met us in Naini Tal, at the hotel where we were to stay. My small brother, Robert, had been left in England at five years old; Billy was in the army and Richard heading for university. It was good to have a hot bath after the journey, in a tin tub filled from canisters carried by men on their shoulders. I soaked by lamplight, apprehension temporarily suspended in physical pleasure. Now I was to find out how my parents had been spending all those years while I was at my seven schools.

BEGINNING OF A NEW LIFE

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> April

I am now sitting on deck, the wind howling round and a heavy blue-green white-flecked sea waving. The sea is heavenly. It reminds me of that poem of Kipling's - "Thus and no otherwise do the hillmen desire their hills". Something about contemptuous surges. I wish I could remember it. My hands are so cold I can hardly write, but I don't want to go into the saloon because it makes me feel sick. I have got violent diorea which is awkward & unpleasant, & this afternoon I felt so miserably ill I could have cried. I went to sleep instead. I was prepared for disillusion & I've got it good & hearty.

No romantic young men, at least not running after me. The boat consists mainly of Tommies plus crowds of dirty little children, and old Colonels who wander round in dirty white tennis shoes & emerge for boat drill at the wrong time. Mummy has picked up three female friends who obviously consider me of no significance whatsoever.

This is several days later and there is a definite change for the better. I am enjoying life quite a lot now, and have made friends with an extremely nice medical student called Roy.

## Diary account

### BEGINNING OF A NEW LIFE

Early April 1939 Sunday

I am now sitting on deck, the wind howling round and a heavy blue-green white-flecked sea waving. The sea is heavenly. It reminds me of that poem of Kipling's 'Thus and no otherwise do the hillmen desire their hills'. Something about contemptuous surges. I wish I could remember it. My hands are so cold I can hardly write, but I don't want to go into the saloon because it makes me feel sick. I have got violent diorea which is awkward and unpleasant and this afternoon I felt so miserably ill I could have cried. I was prepared for disillusion and I've got it good and hearty.

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called Roy Bodenham. Unfortunately he has another and much more ravishing lady friend in the 1<sup>st</sup> class deck who he obviously adores and when she arrives I have to disappear. But still he does spend a good deal of his time with me. And we are really quite matey. He's told me all about his school and University career and I've done the same with mine. I didn't feel in the slightest bit romantic about him till last night. I had dressed up and gone into watch the dancing and he was there with a rather hideous girl who dances very well. He had put on a dark blue suit and was looking definitely nice and came and sat next to me and asked me to dance. Of course I tried to refuse but he almost dragged me onto the floor and was perfectly adorable – very encouraging and rather tender and protective. My heart missed several beats, or rather I had a horribly lovely feeling in the pit of my stomach. Of course his girl friend came down for him

[From the book or journal called “Turnip Tops”

If only if it was given me again to feel the vivid start that beauty brought, when youth was warm and strong. The heart-stirring revelation, the movement of body and mind when a silver shaft of sunlight over a purple moor – the sun going down in splendour over those dream isles of the West – opened for me the golden gates and took me into some magic country of the soul. Sensation – ecstatic experience. The moving of light on water drenched silver of the moon swimming in the deep, blue cup of the night. The touch of a body against ones own – sun – wind the smell of earth fresh turned. Those are the true values of living, the heart and truth of life itself – the moments when we drink of the very essence of life stripped clean of the material and the base. And they are God help us All, the Gifts of the Morning of Life. That fine, free, careless strange magical linking of emotion and vision, that inner unity of created life.]

eventually and I had to fade away. I disliked it, but I am sensible enough to see that at 16 I am quite incapable of competing with a lovely girl of about 20. There are new complications because there is a youth of 14 called Robin who has developed a frightful pash for me. I have had to promise to play ping-pong with him. He is an intelligent infant but only an infant. There is also a dark and peculiar young man who beams brightly at me every time we meet and quite often says “Hullo” though I've never spoken to him. I started by being coldly distant but gave it up as a bad job and now grin quit unashamedly whenever we meet. According to R. he is 25 but I must say doesn't look it. I don't know if I can have any attraction at all. I think I must have just a little, because I definitely have attracted a few people. I am gradually assuming self-confidence. It is a slow and rather painful process, but signs that I may be attractive have given me self-respect. There is another young man of about 25 who has shown a desire to be friendly. He is always on the deck in the morning and I got into conversation with him. He is a tea-planter (I think) in Assam and is mad about animals. He keeps deer, two bears and various other oddments. He has leant me a book called “My friend ?Toto” which I adored it is by Cherry Keaston – about an amazing chimp he had. Beautifully written of course. I hardly ever see this individual. I don't know what he does with himself all day – plays ping pong most of the time I should imagine. He's going to Bombay which is one blessing. I have various other friends. Or rather acquaintances on board ship. One is a ghastly looking platinum blond who I like because she is the only person to whom I can talk complete bilge. She practically never opens her mouth herself which is still more encouraging. Then there is a very sweet and very good looking sailor, who often talks to me. He has a brownish pink complexion, blue eyes with very white whites, and very long dark curly lashes. He is Scotch. Also a girl who has been a beauty specialist for 5 years with whom I play ping pong, coits etc:

She is nice but a little spineless. But the one whom I really adore is the baggage steward. He is tall and walks with a slight stoop, blue eyes, brown hair and a beautiful Oxford accent. We had trouble about our baggage at the beginning of the voyage and he always found me when I was alone, so I managed to say quite a lot to him. Now whenever we meet in the passage we grin sheepishly. He has an adorable way of smiling with his eyes alone. Oh I do worship him but he obviously doesn't care two hoots about me. Its wretched. Still life has a thrill, just the hope of meeting him round the corner. Every turn in the passage is fraught with expectation. My day consists of the following. Rise 7.15, dress in trousers and blazer and emerge on deck to take the dogs for a run. Breakfast at nine when I have grapenuts and some toast. After breakfast trail down to my cabin, tidy and collect books, rugs etc. for the deck. Then I go up and lie on my tummy on the deck, spending the rest of the morning reading, knitting, talking and playing games. Lunch at 1.30 which isn't usually over till two thirty, when we go down to the baggage room (me ostensibly to Collect some article of clothing but really to see the B.S.). Then we rest till 4, rise, play more games, write letters and mooch around till supper. This lasts till 9, after which we go to a film or play card games. I usually tramp vaguely round the deck before going to bed. It is so lovely with the dark, white foaming water swirling by in the moonlight and the phosphoresce darting in and out of the black gleaming mass. All petty worries and silly unnecessary grievances are swept away and tossed by the wind into the face of heaven where God laughs and throws them back, purified and relieved.

Now to get onto real news. I find it almost impossible to write as there is so much to occupy my attention. But I will try to get everything off my chest, so that I can write this regularly from now on.

Well on Wednesday we got to Tangier and to Gibraltar. The things I saw and the things I felt are quite beyond description. I rose at quarter to 6, and by 6 was standing on the deck as we slowly came to rest in Tangier harbour. It was unbelievably lovely. On the left was Africa, dark hills with a sunset glow spreading right along them. On the right lay Tangier, a bay with a hill rising out of the glassy blue sea on whose gentle slope was a mass of white buildings, mosques etc. There was a sheen of golden, warmly windy light, and as the sun rose over the hills of Africa the white buildings went a shade whiter and then windows lit up and sparkled. The sea was a brilliant blue and almost from nowhere about a dozen rowing boats appeared, in which brown men in colourful costumes – orange cloaks, white hoods etc: were sitting, selling lovely things – carpets, felts, hats, poofs. And all of them the brightest colours. We bought a lovely hat and basket. After breakfast I climbed into coat and skirt and pranced ashore in a tender. It was very hot and on landing I said goodbye to Roy. He seemed pleased to get rid of me, poor dear. Never mind I'll get over it. Quicker than I expect. Gibraltar was lovely. It was hot and sleepy and beautiful brown eyed, glossy hued children played about in the streets. We went up as far as we could in a taxi and there was a heavenly view over the harbour, the reed-roofed houses nestling in the slope and the boats and battleships looking as if they were on glass and could be unstuck. Afterwards we went down, down and down through narrow streets in sun and shadow where thin cats lay in the shade and brown legged youths played football; where donkeys stood patiently drawing carts of fruit and vegetables. And girls sold bunches of freesias and irises for ridiculously cheap prices. We eventually went back to the ship completely dead.

*Friday* Got up in rather a bad temper and remained in it most of day. It was an unusual day and I don't like unusual days. Also it was wet and generally miserable.

We took Solly ashore and first of all went up to Notre Dame de la Garde. It was on a very steep hill overlooking the town and the view over the houses and sea was divine. I



loved the church, especially the white chapel, where I was very moved by a sculpture of Our Lord. It seemed almost alive. The rest of the day was spent trailing round, shopping and searching for non-existent taxis. Had an enormous and very good lunch. My hair is beginning to get straggly which is so infuriating. Am feeling decidedly cross to night as I haven't seen anybody all day. Oh hell!

*Saturday*

A pretty lousy day on the whole. I spend my time being hurled from elation to dejection. I didn't meet Gordon (think that's his name) at all. Oh hell!

Turnip Tops.

Life's hard if you are the ....

*[Fate [a poem - crossed through]*

I have been restless uncertain, not prepared to wait.  
Angry at set-backs, unfulfilled desires.  
Now I can fold my hands and trust to fate.  
I have found quietude which never tires.

There is no conflict in me, which nothing will  
Disturb the placid calmness in my soul.  
What ]

I stood upon the hill. There was no wind  
No breath, no stir, no sign or sound of life.

Quietness stretched before me and behind  
A heavy stillness where there was no strife.

And suddenly I knew myself, knew *me*  
The inner, stifled, incoherent self,  
Was bared, and for a moment, sickeningly,  
Self-conscious thought was laid upon the shelf.

Ecstatic, tearful, on the verge of tears  
Tears of amazement and of half-delight  
I felt the mystery of all the years  
Dissolve and fade into this new-found light.

I did not think, I did not try to guess  
The meaning or the reason or the sense.  
I knew I felt, I *was*. No more, no less.  
Here, somehow, somewhere, was the recompense.

The recompense for restless fretful hours  
In searching for the strange essential "I".  
That self which, though we seek it, always cowers.

*Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> April*

What an utter B.F. I am not to have kept an account of the voyage day by day. Now from the hills of Naini I look back with a slightly hazy homesickness, remembering impressions but not details, valuing so much more what I took for granted. The lovely feeling to open my eyes in the morning and feel the gentle motion of the ship and the stewardess coming in with the fruit. To slide off my bunk, wash and climb into trousers and emerge onto deck. And feel the fresh sea-breeze blowing my hair. To walk round with the dogs, chew an apple and talk to Robert knowing that he relishes very word, or listen to Gordon. Then breakfast, grapenuts and an orange, and down to my cabin to collect my things. The rest of the morning on deck, reading or playing games, till lunch. The blueness of the sea, the sun, the feel of the ???, Roy in his flannels, and later Gordon in his white shirt and shorts. Lunch and afterwards baggage room and a sleep in the warm darkness of the cabin. Waking up, tea, and then more games in the coolness of the evening, usually a talk and a drink before changing. Dinner and afterwards the cool starlit water and the strains of the dance band and then bed and heavy dreamless sleep. What a lovely carefree life. How little I appreciated it too. Only one more voyage in my life I suppose. Oh hell!

*Port Said*

I was up early and on deck watching them load cargo. It was fascinating. All the little brown, bare-footed men padding about, laughing and shouting. So different from the stolid, English workman! After breakfast I got 2 letters and watched a conjuror saying "No snakes, only chickens, gully-gully". Then we went ashore. It was glamorous, not too hot, but with a sort of sleepy tenseness in the air. We were followed by persistent men with trays selling things of 1/6 which they proudly declared came from their agents Woolworths!

I got a bracelet for Betty, one for myself, and was *given* a ring by the Todds. I must say the East does fascinate me. It is the atmosphere – the queer (*very* queer!) smells of strange herbs, dusty smoke, dirty people and peculiar food. And oh, the glorious jewelry and clothes and oddments at Smith?? Arts. After leaving Port Said we steamed gently down the Suez Canal. It is really only a little trickle through a perfectly flat desert, but in the evening light, when we got to lakes, it was very lively with the dunes a burnished gold with purple shadows. I was very happy there making friends with Marjery, talking and playing tennis with Gordon and watching the loveliness of the moon on moving water at night, with lights bobbing about on the water. It was about this time too that I started bathing. I was very touched because one day I mentioned vaguely to Gordon that I was gong to bathe at 6 the next morning and then forgot entirely about it. But I found the next day that the poor dear had actually got up himself at that unearthly hour. Sweet of him. The bath is 2 ft square about, but great fun. I don't look at all bad in my costume which is sort of green rubber, and holds one firmly in. I've come to the conclusion that I did attract Gordon – but him being engaged and so forth. Its all most complicated. I suppose even when engaged ones not immune, but it rather alters the outlook so to speak – cramping undoubtedly.

*Aden*

We only had three quarters of an hour here and went ashore with Mr Yewnie and Rosamunde Tyndale-Biscoe to buy underclothes. I've never seen such hideous men –



gigantically tall but like sticks with round shiny heads. Saw a camel cart. Two people got left ashore and the boat had to be stopped. Met a Col. Vivian - 1<sup>st</sup> - who had a drink with us. A rather attractive man.

The rest of the journey I cannot describe in detail. The same sort of routine went on, I got more friendly with Gordon and Margery and so it goes on. I'm sure the Baggage Steward was faintly attracted - he showed it in lots of little ways. And on the last day he talked to me. I hated leaving him.

### *Bombay*

After tender farewells to all and sundry and a gruelling time with the Customs (during which I held two restless dogs, hats coats and God knows what else in the boiling sun amidst a seething mass of coolies heaving trunks about) we returned to a hotel and lay in the coolness all the afternoon. Had a bath and tea. And then went for a drive with the Todds. It was a lovely evening, cool and sunny, and I adored my first smell of India. Everything, the clothes, the flowers, the trees, looked so lovely in the golden light. We ended up by having ices at the Taj. We boarded the train at 7.30.

### *Journey*

This was outstanding only for dust and heat. I sat in my bra and pants covered in sweat and dust and trying, but failing to read. The meals were lovely. We had baths and dinner at Muttia and got to Kathcodalin early next morning, were met by Daddy, and drove up to Naini.

At which point, I suppose I ought to give my "impressions". But I won't - in fact can't. There are no romantic young men, no young men at all as far as I can make out, but is very amiable. I ride up to college in the morning, sleep in the afternoon and write or work in the evening. I also sail occasionally, Mah Jong occasionally, dance (very occasionally) and talk quite a lot. The food is lovely and I'm very happy on the whole. I wish I had some companions of my own age but no doubt they'll come later.

## RETURN TO INDIA





Dog assistant?

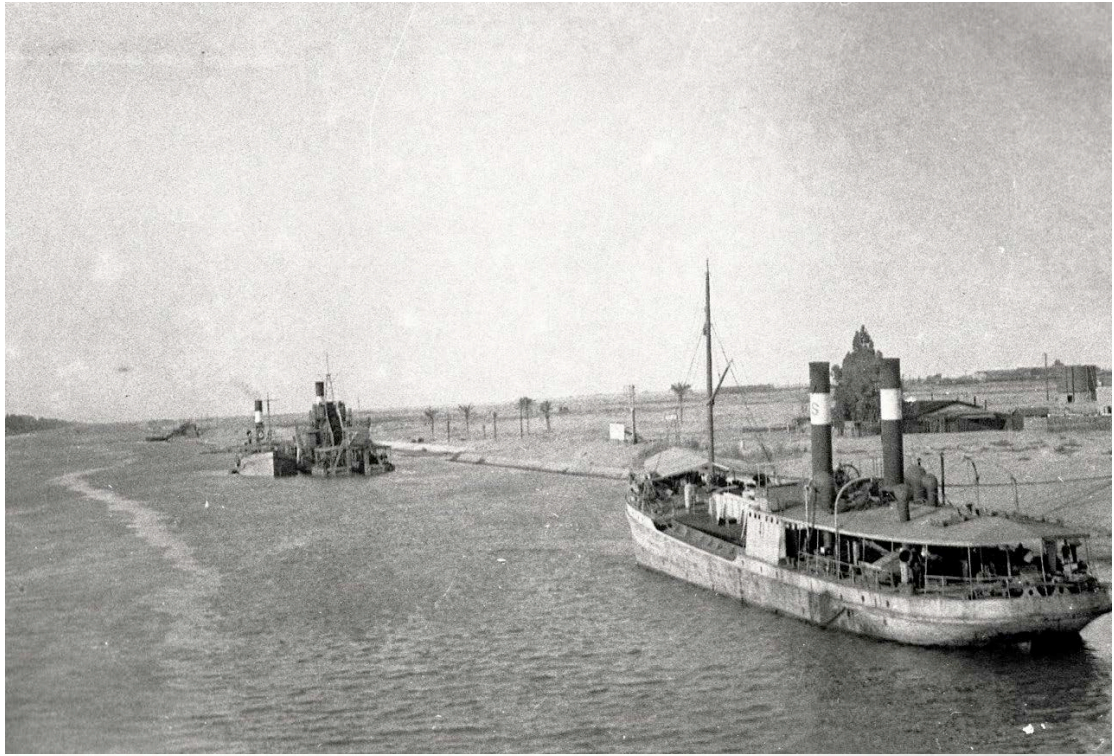


Island with tugs

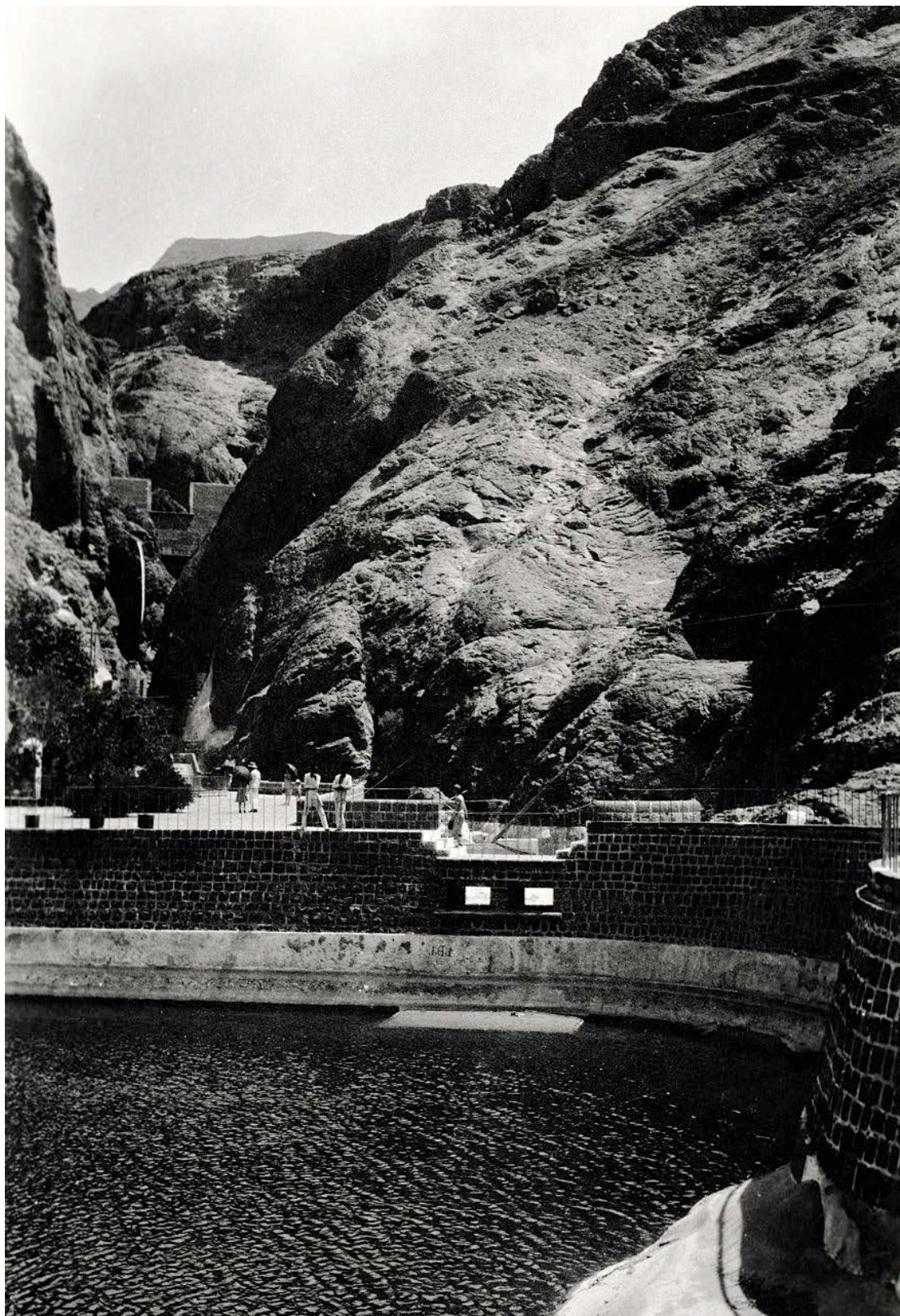
Through the Suez Canal













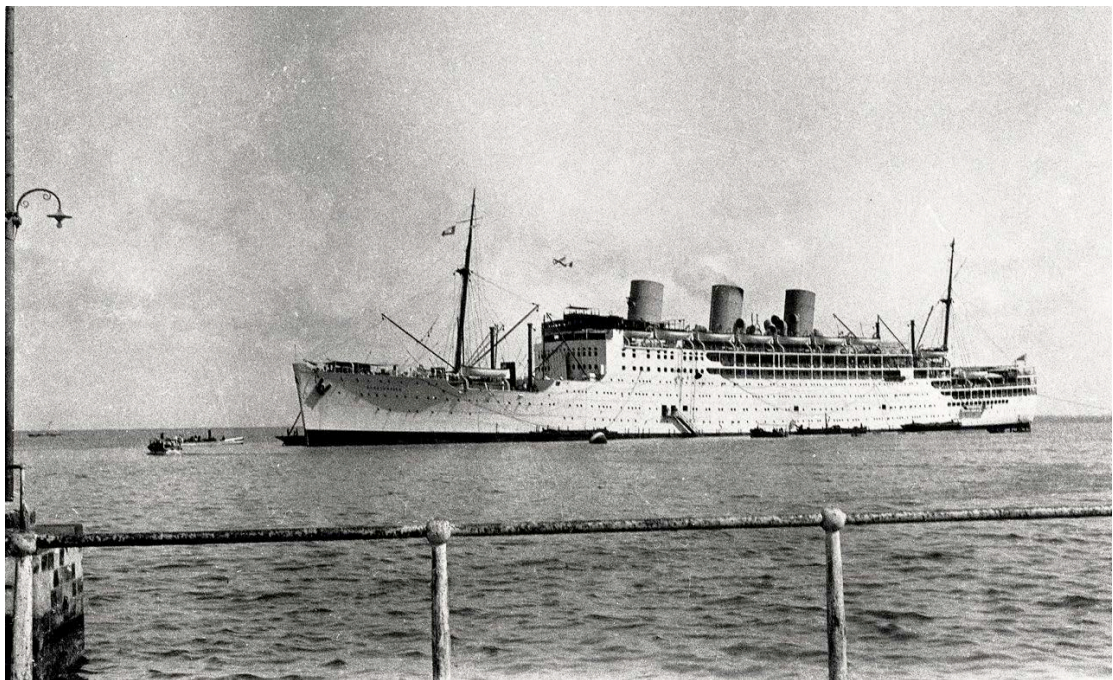




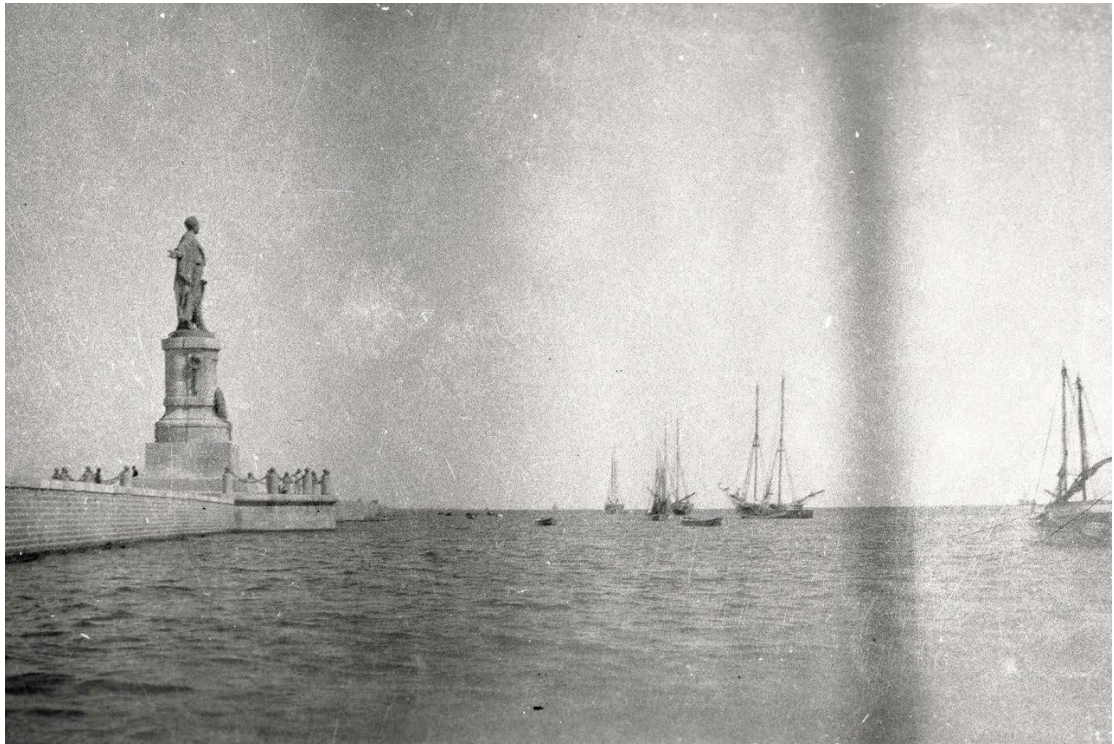




## HARBOURS AND PORTS







## 2 NAINI TAL - 11 May 1939 - 25 October

### William Rhodes James Memoranda - back of 1943 Diary

17.12.30 Appointed Inspecting Officer L & C Naini Tal  
5.8.31 Lt Colonel  
3<sup>rd</sup> May to 4 June 32 Leave to Coonoor  
6.11.32 Transferred from Eastern to N.Command (Pindi)  
10.4.33 Robert born  
March 34 7m 14 days leave to England. St Martins Corner Blackheath Nr. Guildford  
Oct 34 10 ML & C N.Command  
May 37 Off Director ML & C Simla till Oct 37  
Oct 37 DD (Deputy Director) ML & C W.Command Karachi  
June 38 4 months leave to England Womersley (?)  
8.11.38 Dep Director E.Command Naini Tal  
10.4.41 Iris married. [mistake, actually 1.3.41]  
20.12.41 Alan born

### Sources

There are several sources for the 18 months that Iris spent in India before she met Donald Macfarlane on October 6th 1940 in Naini Tal. The fullest is the diary she kept for most of the period. Although it is full of a good deal of girlish chit-chat, and mostly revolves around her love affairs, it is worth including for several reasons. As far as I know, it is unique as a diary of someone in north India just before the war. It continues the story of Iris' early education until she left England, and shows the stultifying effects of waiting for marriage in an Indian hill station. And it bridges the period between school and marriage.

As well as the diary, my mother wrote a brief account of this period in her unpublished autobiographical novel 'Going Back' written in about 1980. She clearly based parts of this on the diaries themselves. Parts of 'Going Back' were also used in the published account in 'Daughters of the Empire', written in about 2000. For the moment, I shall just add in some supplementary memories and impressions from 'Going Back' if they appear to give details missing from the diaries and 'Daughters', but obviously the novel was written with a good deal of artistic licence.

The account written in about 2000, partly from memory and partly from the earlier novel and diaries, is as follows (Daughters of the Empire, p.107)

"The first thing I discovered was that there was to be no settled home in India like the bungalow beside the Irrawaddy to which my mother had gone. The Raj were posted like mail-order parcels hither and thither from plains to hills, so that we never stayed anywhere longer than six months. During the two years before my marriage we lived in a hotel, two different bungalows and some rather superior tents. My mother was constantly packing, unfussed and in full song. "I dreamt I dwelt in mar-harble halls" echoed happily from the depths of tea chests as she stashed away the china and linen and the packets of letters from Harold and Arnold. Ant-like processions of coolies carried them up and down the hillsides on their backs, bent double, with straps round their sweating foreheads. When



they stopped for a rest they laughed a lot and spat "pan" over the precipices. I later found out that they were sickly and short-lived.

Our departure from the maisonette in Earls Court had been hasty, almost furtive. It seemed we had been very short of the rent and had had to get away before an uncomfortable interview with the landlord. Now suddenly our fortunes were restored. We were staying in the best hotel in Naini Tal, the Royal, run by an elderly English couple and of course exclusively for Europeans. [see Royal Hotel website]. We had a chalet in the grounds with our own sitting room and went over to the hotel for meals, which were eaten to the accompaniment of a three piece band; two kinds of soup, fish, chicken, duck or pork with potatoes moulded into different shapes, souffles, ice creams or gateaux, cheese and biscuits. A lot of the supplies must have been carried up by coolies who themselves lived on a handful of rice a day. Thoughts like that didn't occur to me until I had been in India for several years.

Naini Tal was very beautiful, its wooded hillsides rising steeply from a pear-shaped lake. For a few months I went to school, riding along the lakeside with the dalmatians streaming behind me. I still thought there was a chance that I would return home after a year, and maybe get to university. All Saints College had the necessary curriculum and was a friendly place. The other girls were either Indian or Anglo Indian, and my mother felt the same anxiety that Maria had felt as to whether I would pick up the accent, like some unpleasant disease. I wasn't allowed to join my schoolmates for curry lunches, but sat on the hillside eating hotel sandwiches. The idea of taking any of my friends to the hotel was unthinkable. I accepted this, like everything else, as a law of nature, fixed in the interests of us all.

There were twice weekly dances in the hotel, and I grew to dread Tuesdays and Thursdays because my mother couldn't bear to hear the band playing waltzes and fox-trots for other people to dance to, particularly for men who weren't dancing with me. Sometimes in desperation she would gather together the middle-aged grass widowers from surrounding tables, and get together a party for a dance. Nobody went without being in a party, and you had to stick with your own set for the evening. Both the Colonels and I found it hard work tramping round the wooden floor, from which the lounge carpets had been lifted for the evening. My silver slippers had high heels on which I could hardly balance, let alone dance.

The big social event was the Matelots Ball, run by the racing fraternity. My mother wangled a ticket for me, but when I arrived I found everyone else was in a party. My dance card dangled from my wrist embarrassingly bare. In the end one of the grass widowers took me over, and late on in the evening I got my first kiss in a cubicle under the boathouse. I was surprised but encouraged. He was only about forty and made me feel I could set my sights higher than district commissioners ready for retirement.

In September the war broke out, but this affected us very little. My small brother Robert was sent out, we all moved down to the plains, and in the Spring up to the hills again. The war brought a lot of young men in uniform on leave, and because I had thinned down a bit and girls were scarce, I started to have the good time that the East was famous for providing. My mother was pleased, but also jealous. There were barneys and long silent days. In the summer of the Battle of Britain I went to the YWCA to learn shorthand in the hopes of getting a job and leaving home.

But there was really nowhere to get away to, except into marriage, and at seventeen and a half I began seriously to size up my escorts. Four months after my eighteenth birthday I wore my black skirt and bolero to one more Boat Club dance and almost fell off my silver heels at the sight of a young man in our party, a brown-faced, golden-haired, blue-eyed Viking hero. I had fallen in love on an average once a month since arriving in India, but this time it was mutual. Unbelievably none of my drawbacks mattered: my leg, my non-flaring nostrils, my cleverness. My mother was equally astounded and lost no time in setting a date for the wedding.

### **Going Back - selected passages**

There are some further passages in 'Going Back' which are useful and can be integrated.

(p. 154) 'We're in a hotel quite low down with is a pity, I'd have liked to live in a house right up in the pines. I ride up every day into them to College - it's a school really, and I seem to be the only white girl there, the rest are all shades from chocolate to ivory and they all speak in a sing song voice called Chi Chi. This is what damns you out here, it shows you must be Dark. Mummy is always watching that I don't pick it up, but I'd like to, at least when I'm at college.

The girls are cheerful and most of them are beautiful, some really gorgeous with huge lustrous black eyes and lashes a foot long and divine figures, but they wouldn't be allowed into our clubs, Mummy says I can't invite them even for tea in the hotel. I feel cross about it but there isn't anything I can do. Making fun of chi chi accents is one of the things white people do all the time, it's a peculiar thing I never thought of till I came out.

Life is quiet at present because the Season hasn't begun when the young men come on leave. I'm glad, I dread having to go to dances, I don't feel able to cope with men except elderly ones. There's one in the hotel, he's a Colonel and sits at a table near us and we often sit in the lounge and chat and I've even told him about wanting to write. He said "Fight. Life's one long fight, and you've got to make up your mind not to be upset by the knocks. Life won't be anything like you thought but fight all the same." He's a super man though he is about 42. I never seem to meet anyone under 40.

I read that sentence again, and I thought "But what about the Indians" and I realised that I never meet them at all. They're just milling about waiting on us at table, running up with skinny horses for us to ride, serving in shops. They even carry us in a sort of chair called a dandy, we went out to dinner one evening and these men carried us about four miles up a steep hill. They put cloth pads on their shoulders for the poles and they jog along, grunting a sort of half song. It was quite cold but they were sweating, we had started a bit late and Mummy kept shouting "Jaldi, jaldi" and she is quite fat and they had to run with her up the hill. I feel unhappy about things like that, but nobody else seems to notice.

John (the Colonel) feels the same though, he has just had to tell himself that if it wasn't for us (the British) these people would be worse off, we do give them jobs and bring trade to the shops and so on. He says they adore us, the servants stay with their Sahibs for years and weep when they retire and go home, so that's rather nice. He says the agitation and Gandhi are nothing to worry about, they really like us being here, and I'm sure he must be right but I do wonder if they like carrying fat white women up steep hills for just a few pennies.

John has asked me to a party he is giving at the Boat Club, its Fancy Dress and I rather dread the thought of it and don't know what to wear and I bet I have my curse, I always do at the wrong moment and it seems much worse up here in the hills. It is about 7,000 feet here and I'm getting thin with all the climbing, though I do ride a lot too.

...

I was up at college eating my sandwiches on the hillside (the others have curry and rice but Mummy always sends me with a packed lunch, I think she's afraid if I eat curry every day I'll turn brown.)

...

October 14th

We took Nehru to see "Berkeley Square". He has a wife but she never comes with him. I wrote a poem trying to express my feelings about being young and helpless and wanting to plan my life and not being able to. I thought of my grandmother and felt terribly homesick, but for what home?

October 15th .... I wish I could do something useful like cancer research or something. Nothing of the war seems to have been mentioned in this diary but it hardly touches us.

Saturday 21st. Played tennis and then Mummy and I went with Nehru to see "Comet over Broadway". I do wonder if Nehru really likes coming to films with us so often, I think it's the only thing Mummy can think of doing with him, she has to entertain him but she doesn't want to ask him with her other friends. It's very peculiar, he's much more intelligent than most of the English here, but he's automatically considered inferior. I don't get it.

....

Wednesday 25th October. My last day at college. I didn't like saying goodbye to them, I wonder what they will make of their lives. The poor, pretty creatures with that fatal Colour. They all said to come and see them but I know I never will – how can I when I can't ask them to tea even? I know I shan't go on with my work either, what's the point with a war and no chance ever of getting to Oxford? ....

October 26th. We're down in the plains and this is India – flat and dusty and hot and full of regiments. We're living in tents but they have brick floors and bathrooms and fire places and carpets.

November 16th. Here we are, 50 miles from Bareilly, in a dusty deserted little town with a clothing factory and that about all. Elaine Wheeler who was at college with me lives here, and I went to see her – it was most embarrassing having her mother running around me as if I was visiting royalty or something. They wanted me to stay on, but of course my parents wouldn't let me. Elaine is blonde (or perhaps it's dyes) but she has this creamy skin and green eyes, but according to Mummy you can tell she's coloured because of her nails. And the fact that her father works in the railways and her breath smells of onions. This is the thing that really worries me, this attitude to Anglo Indians. Indians have their own lives, they don't really need us, but Anglo Indians don't seem to have anything and after all they are our fault, we created them, so why do we despise them so much? I wish I could do something for them but I know I won't even be allowed to ask Elaine to stay.

...

November 17th. Now we are in Lucknow, a dignified place full of white buildings and broad roads and lots of trees. We were taken round the Residency. My great grandmother was in the Mutiny, my grandmother used to tell me about it and how she hid one of the children under crinoline.

Sunday 26th. We have been sightseeing to all the massacre places which were fascinating.

...

December 24th. We drove out to camp, where we're spending Christmas with friends of Daddy's. It is very grand, we're in tents but there are hot bats, elephants, wonderful meals with lots of servant buzzing about.

Monday 25th. Christmas day, and I spent it lying in the grass with a gun. I didn't want to shoot the beautiful ducks, I wouldn't have hit any of them anyway. There are huge expanses of water fringed with rushes, and in the early morning thousands of whirring wings rise out of the sunrise. In the evening the sun set behind the rushes and a big yellow moon came up and the whole inland sea was aflame.

....

January 4th 1940. I've been riding every morning on the horse that Desmond gave me. It's beautiful on the sandy paths, the dust and smoke, and the villages where the women are making chappattis on hot stones. This is the India I long to be part of, I feel empty, just sniffing in the burnt, clean air, free, myself.

April 15th I've started Typing and Shorthand classes at the YWCA. It reminds me of Elizabeth all those lifetimes ago when life was a huge laugh.

## DIARIES

### NAINI TAL

#### Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May

Sailed with John Walker in the morning. Not too successful as the wind was all wrong, so we didn't stay out long. While we were drinking afterwards General McRae and Col. Jameson came along. I felt a bit awkward being the only girl so after a bit I left them to it. I think Jamesons sweet. We have been invited to government House to dinner. I'm feeling decidedly nervous, but apparently I shall have the A.D.C's. If it is the one I met the other night - oh boys, whoopee! Tut, tut, decidedly juvenile. We've also been asked to a show at Sherwood College, starting with Holy Communion and ending with a little "hop"!

#### Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May

Had a long talk with Hodgen in the evening. He is really too sweet and much the most sensible person here. We talked mostly about me, and I told him about my ambition to write. And he said, "Fight. Life's one long fight, and you've got to make up your mind not to be upset by the knocks. If you want a thing go right ahead and try to get it, and don't be upset by set-backs. You're bound to be disillusioned and life won't be anything like you thought but fight all the same." He apparently hates the life, and has given up trying to make friends because everyone is so flippant and casual. He never wanted to come into the army and has never been happy in it, and that's why he always advises people *not* to get into a rut into which they don't fit. It makes me feel so bucked up to talk to someone like that, whose entire conversation is not centred on what happened in Sweatipore in 1902, and who really thinks and feels and is intelligent. He's so young



somehow, in spite of the fact that he must be 42 at best, and though he's about 6ft 5, he always makes me feel protective!

### **Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May**

Went to see "I see Ice" with Daddy and laughed uproariously all the way through. In the evening after dinner we went into the music room and played and sang. The devastating young man plays superbly, but I wasn't allowed to stay and hear him long. Mummy is so possessive somehow. Directly I'm enjoying myself, she comes along and says its time to go. I've noticed that before several times, and it makes me wild. I can't argue in front of everybody, but I seethe inwardly.

### **Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May**

Had my hair done, and then went to a drinks party at Curtoise's (?) house. It was great fun. I'm falling desperately for Rayner. I can't stop myself, as its too silly because he's obviously in love with Swedish March. Also talked to Wally Kelly who said I was the most intelligent person he'd talked to in 4 drink parties! This under the influence of much whisky and soda, but still quite gratifying.

### **Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May**

College in morning. In the evening Rayner came and fetched me to skull, and although it looked very threatening I couldn't resist the temptation to go with him. The Swedish Match was there and Curtoise, and luckily we didn't go out, because a terrific storm started, with slashing rain, thunder and lightning. We played darts till nearly seven and then I went off to Mullens in a dandy where I found my parents. I'm learning quite a lot about Life and Men.

- a) That large men make me feel protective, ie. Hodgen
- b) That the knowledge that a man is unhappy with his wife and is consequently carrying on with another woman, makes me fall in love with him. ie. Rayner.

### **Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> May**

Went for a solitary ride in the morning for 2 hours which I loved. Drinks were in progress when I came back (Question - when aren't they?) At which were congregated the Dogods and W.K's. I didn't make such a good impression on him this time - in fact on anybody. Hell!

### **Monday 10<sup>th</sup> May**

Dinner at Government House. I was rather nervous before going and definitely in a blue funk when I got there. I met Barbara Horton, who is a sweet kid and rather attractive, and at dinner I sat next to Freeman. This was all very agreeable and I enjoyed dinner until the end, when champagne and overeating had the unpleasant effect of making me feel very ill. After dinner the feeling became more and more acute and I eventually had to retire into the garden and be very sick. I managed to get back in time to say goodbye, and got home alright, but that night was complete hell, what with biliousness and diarrhea, and I spent the next two days in bed.

### **Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May**

Got up in the evening and actually danced! At least I danced with John Walker and Mrs B.W. John dances beautifully and give me complete heart failures, but is very sweet nevertheless. In the evening sauntered down to get a present for Mummy (pair of stockings and a picture frame) and afterwards went to the boat club to have a row. Here I ran into Stuart and Malcolm who asked me to cox for them which I did very unsuccessfully and showing a large expanse of knicker if not more. I like Malcolm a lot – he must be about 30 and so attractive and blue eyed.

### **Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup>**

An uneventful day. In the afternoon Mummy had a tennis party, and I watched and was rather bored.

### **Friday 24<sup>th</sup>**

The fateful Matelots dance – and was it fateful! Of course I had fearful collywobbles all day and when the time came to go down I was inwardly panicking, though outwardly beautifully calm. When I got there I found Nan and she dragged me round introducing me to various people who of course had to give me a dance. All frightfully embarrassing. The nicest person was a young policeman called Bune (?) with whom I had a rum punch. The excitement of the evening was Hodgen who turned out to be a “grande amour”. He had one dance and demanded another and after this second one rushed me away to a dark corner under the boathouse and there followed an intensely arduous love scene, which embarrassed and shocked me into mute surrender. I can’t understand why, but his embraces woke not the smallest response. And I only had a slight feeling of revulsion. And a queer consciousness that I was somewhere else looking on. I think it is my old dread of scenes that fills me with a hatred of emotional rolls in the hay. I wonder if I shall ever like being kissed. I suppose if it’s the right person it’ll be alright. I wonder what Hodgen really feels about me. It’s so complicated him having a wife and daughter. Got home at 2.30.

### **Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> May**

Went to the Garden Party in the afternoon and it was pretty deadly. I saw Freeman but didn’t get a chance to talk to him. Also saw Bune but ditto. Met Barbara Horton and the Godwin girl, both of whom I like a lot. I don’t care for Mavis S-S much. In the evening we went out to dinner with the Humms, and afterwards we played Vingt et Un and the others bridge. It was rather fun and we went on till 12.

### **Sunday June 4<sup>th</sup>**

Did nothing particular, except after dinner went to a rehearsal and read Gwen’s part. It was pretty desperate – I was dead tired and everybody was vague and Mummy most of all. I hope to god she doesn’t have to take it on....

### **Monday June 5<sup>th</sup>**

Can't remember. Went up to college and sank into a dreary depression. I have missed out a week during which:-

- (a) We had a dance at the Royal in which I fell desperately for Rayner - or rather slipped own the last slope.
- (b) A dance at government House which I *didn't* enjoy - we arrived late which was fatal. I had to sit out several dances and felt ghastly.
- (c) Dinner and dance with the Pughs. Quite enjoyable, with Richard Simon as an escort - only I drank to too many gimlets and could hardly stand up straight.
- (d) Regatta which was rather fun - we (Richard S and I) splashed about in canoes not very successfully and I coxed ditto.

### **Tuesday June 6<sup>th</sup>**

College in morning. In the evening joined Malcolm's party for dinner and dance. I enjoyed dinner very much and the dancing quite. Met rather a nice young man called Sidney Wood. Doubt if anything will come of it though. He may buy Bashful.

### **Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup>**

Revolting day which I spent in being agonisingly sick.

### **Thursday 8<sup>th</sup>**

In bed all day.

### **Friday 9<sup>th</sup>**

Got up in morning. Talked to Rayner for a bit about Hodgen who proves to be as coquettish as ever. Rode up to see the snows in the evening but they were not visible.

### **Tuesday June 13<sup>th</sup>**

Joined General McReas party for dinner and dance in the hotel. Enjoyed myself a lot - in fact really enjoyed myself. Rest of the party consisted of - Women - Jane, Barbara Horton, Sheila Falkner, Maureen Baird, Mrs Pugh, Mrs Moore (?), Me. Men - Neil, Boon, Sidney, Falkner, Hugh Rance, John Freeman, Grant, Pugh, General,<sup>?</sup> (Jack Buchanan). At dinner I sat between Sidney and Falkner and eat nothing but enjoyed it awfully. Falkner and I had a deep and a trifle indecent conversation re convents - ie should one shut oneself off from opposite sex. Both agreed no with reservations. Said if one did what one thought was right it was , at which he replied "Murder included". This stumped me but turned hastily to discuss dysentery with Sidney. The dancing was fun, I enjoyed the company of Neil best, with Sidney and Jack Buchanan running up. Neil I think likes me, though not passionately. We sat out one and danced one. Sidney is v. intelligent - we discussed books - he is a "Turnip tops" fan. In a moment of heat and excitement said I'd show him my play. But will not - definitely.

### **Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup>**

Went up to College in the morning but regretted it frantically as had violent pain, and could hardly get back in time. Spent the rest of the day in bed, but after a stiff brandy

got up and went to the party. Enjoyed it quite but not so much as yesterday. Include: Miss Gilbert, Falkners, Heffenders, Hodgen, Man, Nicholson, and later Mrs. B.W. and Jameson, Dick. Met Neil who asked me for a dance but couldn't give it. Blow.

#### **Thursday 15<sup>th</sup>**

In bed in morning with violent gripes and diorhea. Eventually turned to blood and mucous and was carted off to hospital. It was lovely and clean and airy but strange and the atmosphere a bit frightening. Was perfectly alright or rest of day!

#### **Friday (16<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>) to Thursday**

Spent in hospital. The diagnosis showed definite bacillary dysentery, though I was practically alright the whole time. Mrs Tizell was next door and afforded comic relief. We both went into long and gory descriptions of our various symptoms, neither listening to what the other was talking about. Neil and Yvonne de Hamel came to see me, also Cotton, but otherwise only parents. Read, did a highly complicated jig saw, wrote an interminable letter to Betty, played Patience and day-dreamed. Was starved for 3 days and nearly passed out – only relief being Horlicks and revolting salts two hourly.

#### **Friday 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Got up in morning and talked to John Hodgen. We sat on the sofa and held hands and it was quite pleasant.

#### **Saturday 24<sup>th</sup>**

Rode in morning and got caught in violent rain. Bazaar in evening to buy material for coat and skirt.

#### **Sunday 25<sup>th</sup>**

Went to lunch with Vivians. Very enjoyable and high class society – All commissioners. Also Baird's Secretary. Rather nice. I wonder what Neil really feels about me. He always seems very pleased to see me. In the evening went to see "3 Smart Girls Grown up". Was utterly adorable. Deanna grows sweeter each picture and her figure – its ravishing!

#### **Monday 26<sup>th</sup>**

The fateful cocktail party. There were about 60 people for drinks. I was in a perfect stew at first, but soon got into a group and enjoyed myself thoroughly. I talked to Maxwell at the end who was very amiable and not at all stuck up. Result of several potent cocktails, one of which nearly knocked me flat. When the general rabble had gone the rest of us – about 20 – stayed on for bacon and eggs. I sat next to Dick and a nice youth called Michael Littlewood. As the evening wore on he came more and more amorous. And after scrabbling about in the dark playing sardines for some time we relapsed onto a sofa and, in a pally embrace – discussed Birth Control and whether there was a God or not. Odd but enjoyable. I fear I neglected Dick utterly but he *is* so



stodgy. I have never seen anything like it – every one was sitting about on everybody else's knees, kissing etc: Dick arranged to take me to to-morrows dance but I don't want to go.

## RANIKHET

**Monday July 10<sup>th</sup>**    Wedding anniversary of M & D

I am sitting in a gas-lit room in a bungalow in Ranikhet, and the dark hills are vivid with lightning. It is weeks since I wrote this but nothing of much interest has happened. I have got quite friendly with Yvonne but all the picnics etc we arranged haven't come off. I have been to no dances since Dick went down and doubt if I shall go to any more for months if ever. This is the loveliest place imaginable but I am too weary to write more to-night so will leave descriptions of scenery etc: till to-morrow.

[Ranikhet is a hill station and cantonment town in Almora district in the Indian state of Uttarakhand. It is the home for the Kumaon Regiment (KRC) & Naga Regiment and is maintained by the Indian Army. Ranikhet is at an altitude of 1869 metres above sea level and within sight of the western peaks of the Himalayas.]

**Tuesday July 11<sup>th</sup>**

We came over here on Sunday and the journey was pretty good hell. The driver and Daddy in front with Mummy and I and two dogs at the back and coats food etc. It was stinkingly hot without a breath of air and road was a continual series of hairpin bends which made for giddiness not to mention buzzing in head and ears. We got out at Bowhali for tea and it was breathless – I literally oozed and felt as if I couldn't breathe. In we packed again and ground up and up and to add to the enjoyment the car boiled and after stopping several times we had to get and sit by the side of the road for 10 mins till whatever it was cooled down. When the Sun went down however it was blissful – the blueness of these hills is amazing and all the sunset clouds were frothing over them. We arrived at about 7.30. This bungalow has a heavenly situation – it looks over trees to range upon range of blue hills and then a great bank of clouds. There are masses of vivid flowers all round the porch and compound. When we arrived the sky was vivid tangerine fading to primrose and salt green and the air was full of pine wood smoke, all covered in the faint misty haze of Indian twilight. It was lovely bathing and changing and eating a four course dinner. Then sitting under the stars with bumping moths and the heady flower scents. And so to bed.

Yesterday and to-day have been very peaceful and enjoyable. After breakfast lull (brilliant!) we drove to the bazaar and after various purchases on to the golf-links. Here it was most pleasant with grass and pines and after walking a little way we collapsed into the shade, ate chocolate and took photos. Then we dropped in at the club and had drinks with the Secretary, Brown, who asked us to stay on for a dance on Wednesday which we shall. You never know, it may be fate! What a hope. After lunch I slept and after tea drew, wrote to Betty and went for a stroll.

To-day has been quieter still. I painted all morning and then tore up my work. I always *feel* I could do it and when the time comes just fail. I drew what I considered a good likeness of myself but it was received coldly. Went for long walk in evening. Two sahibs arrived – seem quite amiable.

To-day I finished "The Worst Journey in the World". It is really a beautiful book, one of the kind that in their simplicity and blunt recording of facts stir up your emotion in an inexplicable way. The courage, perseverance and loyalty, the friendship and unselfishness of those men makes me blush for shame. To me it is one of the most wonderful things in the world that men could endure and fight all alone, facing death every day, ever hour practically. All for knowledge. It is this spirit, the spirit that prompted Columbus and the spirit that prompts the Everest expeditions and the solo flights, that makes one believe in mankind. With so much strife and hypocrisy, with hatred preached as a creed, and Fear as a God, it is good to think that the spirit of Adventure is not dead. As long as men risk their happiness for others there is hope for all. The end of the book is very touching I think and one that fills me with my old ache - for what? "And I tell you, if you have the desire for knowledge, and the power to give it physical expression, to go out and explore..... If you march our winter Journeys you will your reward, so long as all you want is a penguins egg." May I remember that in the Winter Journeys of my life.

### **Wednesday July 12<sup>th</sup>**

In the morning Mummy and I drove to Ooput, and walked a little way but it was too hot for much, so we came back. Changed for lunch and had to rush down as Daddy was late. Lunch with General Nicolson was quite pleasant. I sat next the A.D.C. who was rather a wet I thought. Left at 2.30 about. In the evening called on the Nibletts. A nice man, but rather a dark, junk-filled bungalow smelling of sax and floor polish. Rushed back and changed for the cocktail dance. It was fun definitely, but I met nobody of any interest. Bidolph, one of the M.E.S. occupants, turned out a dear and we got on v. well. He has a daughter of 16 and is hesitating whether to bring her out. I said yes definitely. Got back quite early 11 ish.

## **NAINI**

### **Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup>**

Up early and uneventful journey back in good time. Arrived to find a damp and chilly Naini, but two letters - from Jill and Elizabeth - both v. welcome and sweet. Its funny how friendship is utterly different with each person. You give them a different bit of you to suit them and so its really impossible to compare degrees of affection. Betty, Jill and Elizabeth for instance and Jack. My method of approach to each is not in the slightest the same.

### **Friday 14<sup>th</sup>**

Up to College, but did practically nothing. Thought of seeing Yvonne but felt too weary.

### **Books (Cont)**

The Harsh Voice - Rebecca West \*  
Comes a Candle - Storm Jameson  
Rebecca - Daphne Du Maurier \*  
The Pompadour - Margaret Trowner

I married a German – Madeline Kent  
And the Rains Came – Louis Bromfield  
Clansmen – Ethel Boileau  
Tales from the Outposts – Various  
Cercle du Famillee – André Maurois  
The Universe Surveyed – Richards

### **Saturday August 12<sup>th</sup>**

A month has gone by – an eventful month in some ways. At least I seem to have had a lot to do and yet not done much. I've been happier in this month than at any time in Naini – happier than any time in my life since I became self-conscious. Not particularly for anything I've been doing, but because it has been a happy, quiet routine, with no fear of continual criticism, no agonising shyness, continual necessity of being on my best behaviour with Strangers. On thinking over my life it seems to have been pretty good hell on the whole – eternal goodbyes, always in other peoples houses, gauche and unwanted. Well that parts over now. Oh God I'm glad its over.

My 17<sup>th</sup> birthday was *not* a success, owing to the fact that Mummy wanted me to have a party and I didn't want to and so she was in a white hot temper all day. However I went out to tea and they to dinner so we didn't see too much of each other.

Yvonne and I have become rather friendly she's odd – she seems to attract men, and yet has never been kissed or even had her hand held. Granted I haven't had much experience, but then I haven't had the chance. I wonder if it's a greater compliment in a way for men to treat you as a friend – probably. My golf is rather wretched but I'm getting clubs of my own.

Niall has returned plus a moustache and is causing me a few heart-throbs. Quite unwarranted I know, but it cant be helped. We went to dinner there on Monday and there was just us, the Bairds and Yvonne. I sat next to Niall at dinner and got on quite well and afterwards he and I and Yvonne played records while D.Baird showed the parents Curios. The records were heavenly and I enjoyed it all thoroughly. Mall lent me two books and the next day I got a note saying we were definitely going to Bareilly, but declaring this to be a frightful secret, not to be extracted on pain of death. Felt frightfully important and excited only to get another note that day to say it wasn't at all and I could fell anyone. Felt very foolish – bother him. Still he's nice.

[One and a half pages of detailed technical notes on Photography by Iris - omitted]

### **Tuesday August 15<sup>th</sup>**

Disillusionment – Niall doesn't like me in the slightest. I thought he did. Not *more* than like but I did think that. I'm feeling rather depressed, still I suppose it doesn't really matter. I think I must have annoyed him rather badly. He's obviously keen on Yvonne and I don't blame him. I have no proof for these ideas but I just know it is so. Oh they're playing Highland Swing – Oh I'm an *ass*!

### **Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup>**

A wet day. Depression wearing off. I can't think how or why I offended Niall if I did – he probably won't even send me those pictures now. Oh drat! I think Yvonne must have told him unpleasant things about me!

## Thursday 17<sup>th</sup>

A definite improvement – Yvonne came to lunch and afterwards I went up there to listen to records. She showed me a letter Niall wrote her and I don't think it's as nice as what he wrote me and he sent me his love. So perhaps I didn't offend him after all! Anyway we shall see. The records were absolute bliss – Noel and Paul Robeson and Hutch. And we haven't heard any of the classical ones yet. Niall returns on the 28<sup>th</sup> – 11 days – Oh lord! I am dreading the week and season and so forth starting again. I know I won't get asked to any dances at all and I shall have the usual frightful qualms too about dances. *Damn!*

## *Sunday. August 21<sup>st</sup>*

The last 10 days seem to have whisked by – I don't know what I've been doing I'm sure, but I seem to have been pretty full up. Yvonne has been crashing round with me to a certain extent and my golf has got steadily worse – too desperately depressing and I can't do anything about it. Still I always go on hoping each time I go to the golf course that *this* time I'll get the knack. If only someone would tell me something definite to do or not to do. I think I shall go every day after College. I would like to be able to play at least tolerably – enough to go round with anyone.

I've finished "The Rains Came" and enjoyed it awfully. I think a lot of its really good stuff – vivid and true – but there's a certain amount of exaggerated sentimentality. For instance there are continual phrases such as: "Suddenly, as he swept the gutter, he knew that he was sweeping away the old India with its prejudices and superstitions etc". This is pure nonsense and as it is constantly repeated it becomes a trifle annoying. People don't "know" things suddenly – "He was walking along and suddenly he knew she would die" – it isn't human or natural. But it gives a clear picture of India in many ways, and it makes one feel that Indians are human beings, which one is inclined to forget sometimes. Its surprising how little English people try to understand them, how little interest they take in anything outside polo and parties. Women particularly – To-day has been enjoyable – This morning we took the entire pack for a tremendous ride around Naini. After a short sleep we (Mummy and I) went up to Dwaikistan, and while they played tennis I listened to the gramophone. Then we had tea during which John Freeman and Peter Haig arrived. Peter is a dear, coltish but not shy. After which we all ambled down to the Cinema to see "The Great Waltz". Lovely music – Strauss.

## August 30<sup>th</sup>

Got the photos from Niall. So perhaps all's well. Met him later looking unspeakable in a tweed cap of enormous size also Maureen. He'll probably be off to Egypt.

## September 1<sup>st</sup> 1939 WAR

A day that will probably be remembered for ever in the world's history. Hitler has attacked Poland and war is now inevitable and probably started by now. At the moment I can't believe it – that it's happening to *me*, to *us* – it's the sort of thing one talks about and reads about but never imagines will happen to one personally. At the moment I don't know what part I shall play but I do want to do something definite – nurse or

something. I couldn't just dance and go on with the season knowing that thousands were being maimed and killed – possibly friends and relations. Or could I? Anyhow it's all wrong to take it from a personal point of view, though it's a great temptation. I wish I could be of some use.

### **September 3<sup>rd</sup>**

England is now at war with Germany. It had to be, of course. And now that it's here there is no shock in fact rather a sense of relief. The uncertainty is so nerve-wracking and continual crises would have arisen if this had not happened. And I do think that we are in a better position now than we have ever been. Of course it's all vile and unspeakable. And I shall probably never see Richard again or Betty – or Oxford. Still it had to be, that's all one can say about it. As time goes on we shall see how much it's going to cost us and the world to fight for our principles. Evil cannot win therefore Hitler cant.

### **September 16<sup>th</sup>**

The war has been going on for a fortnight and Poland has lasted out wonderfully, but in another week I should imagine it will have to give way. It seems ghastly that we can't do anything definite to help. Several ships have been mined with consequent loss of life, but there have been no raids over France or England. As yet.

As for my own life – it has been rather fuller than usual. A sweet girl called Margot Boyd has come to the hotel and we are most pally. She is 23 and attractive, though too fat, so has had plenty of experience (sinister word!) and we discuss the deeper issues of life at much length. She is much more my type than Yvonne really and has an infinitely sweeter nature. I have also played a little tennis and am much improved so perhaps with practice I'll be O.K. Niall has faded out more or less though I'm wild about him.

### **Sunday September 17<sup>th</sup>**

Yesterday I started my blue-bud efforts – rather successfully! I went to tea with Peggy first. And we walked to Wellesley where we were soon surrounded by about 20 untidy and rowdy infants. I was left with half of them and hadn't the vaguest idea what to do with them, but eventually made them sing which they seemed to enjoy. It think it will be rather fun once we get going.

In the evening Margot and I were going to go to the flicks alone, but were eventually carried off by General McRea and Colonel Berridge and on to the boat house. They were both on terrific form and we all shrieked hilariously but felt rather lost and submerged. Saw Niall who was so-so.

To-day (Sunday) we or rather I went to church in the morning with the Boyds. Met Yvonne, the Haigs etc. And after a lot of chitter chatter returned home. In the afternoon the Nicolson girls came over to tennis – they're rather a nice couple, and one wouldn't know they were coloured. It makes me sick the way Daddy goes on continually about colour – arrant snobbery of course and absolutely typical. What does it matter its not as if I was in danger of falling for a coloured man. It's the pettiness that annoys me so – why should we consider ourselves superior because our skin is a slightly lighter shade. It's incredible. I feel as if could lead people – I *want* to lead people. I want to show them how mean and narrow they are.



## Thursday September 21

Last night I went to a party at the Falkners and enjoyed myself very much. I had internal tremors when I got there to find who it consisted of: - Jean and Roger, Bennets, Lancasters, Pughs, General McRea and Maureen. All the people in the station who terrify me! At first I felt lost and wretched but I talked to Maureen and got more confident and enjoyed my evening a lot. After supper we played roulette at which I won the tremendous sum of 12 annas! Maureen is really rather nice, though I hardly had a chance of talking to her. She mentioned something about going to lunch sometime which I hope comes off. Everybody seemed to treat me reasonably last night. Odd.

Mummy and Daddy were knocked out of the tennis tournament yesterday but Daddy and Gen. McRea are still in and Mummy and Mrs Hallett.

## Friday September 22<sup>nd</sup>

Betty Harris called in the morning to know if I'd like to go for a ride and flicks with her. We set off at about 3 and went at a ferocious speed, eventually coming to rest at a lovely spot with grass and pines. It reminded me strongly of surrey. I shall never get as fond of India as England, though it has a definite fascination I admit. We had tea at the Boat Club and went on to see "Lightning Conductor" with Gordon Harker which was very amusing. Betty is a dear, but very young for her age. Her extreme plainness doesn't seem to matter at all - in fact one doesn't notice it really. But somehow I can never get really intimate with her, and our conversation when together is very general. I am trying lots of ways of writing because mine seems to be getting worse. I used it like at one time but now ----!

## Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup>

*The day - "Mystery at Greenfinger" was born. They had a matin's which went off quite well and afterwards I went and had dinner there with the cast and stayed behind the scenes. It was great fun and Barbara (Horton) and I got on very well. She is rather a sweet kid and in some ways I like her better than Yvonne. Yvonne isn't really my type at all, being sporty, hearty, completely insensitive and mad on company and amusement. I've never found anyone who is really like me - each person has a bit of me in them, but nobody really experiences my "black moods" or is so frantically sensitive. Of course that is to my leg. Jill is the nearest to that and Betty is like me in lots of ways too. The play went very well -*

## Sunday 24<sup>th</sup>

Stayed in bed very late. Went up to tea at Inglis' at which were assembled - Bertie Seawood, Peggy, Maureen, Capt: Wilde (? Strange and silent individual with spectacles) and Peter Haig. Yvonne seems very keen on Peter. She is a peculiar kid really - has absolutely no nerves and shows her liking for people ostentatiously. Bertie seems rather a dear but nothing to get hot and cold about. Barbara came after tea - The film was "The Gangs all Here" and was v. good, Jack of course being angelic. I don't fall for him as much now but like him the same.

## Monday (in pencil)

Have just returned from show. It was a great success – Mummy will be furious I didn't stay on to dance but I don't care. Fell rather depressed at present.

### **Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup>**

The Likemans gave a drink party in the evening which was rather fun. I do love Lander - an angelic creature. Barbara was there and was very amiable. Berridge asked us to dine at his table – he's sweet too and has the most heavenly sense of humour. He and Mummy get on like anything.

### **Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup>**

Maharajah of Balrampur's At Home. We watched tennis and nearly froze, so Barbara and I did a bolt about half way through and sat and gossiped in front of the fire.

### **Thursday Sept. 28<sup>th</sup>**

Played tennis at Hawksdale in the afternoon. Was feeling extremely jittery owing to

(a) my tennis

(b) My leg –

However when I got there I found it was quite a friendly affair. Niall was amiable, nobody was watching and my tennis was quite good. So all went well. I think all my qualms about Niall are unfounded. I hope so. Others present were Wakeleys, Falkners and Maxwell. I was rather speechless on the whole which was annoying, but perhaps it didn't matter.

### **Friday Sept. 29<sup>th</sup>**

Regatta in afternoon with Nicolsons – rather boring and very badly run.

In the evening we had dinner with the Hatfields. I was not looking forward to it, but as always in such cases I enjoyed myself a lot. Others present were the Landers and Yvonne's boy-friend – Lovell-Smith. He was rather sweet and Lander of course was a pet. Mrs Lander too was awfully nice. I'm so glad they'll be at Bareilly – it really ought to be rather a hoot and I only hope comes up to expectations. Mrs Hatfield, though undoubtedly not top-drawer is very kind-hearted and thoroughly pleasant to everyone. I much prefer her to Mrs W.K for instance. Maureen asked me to go to lunch there tomorrow – hope it's a success.

### **Saturday Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>**

After a chaotic morning spent packing myself and the parents off, I went up to lunch with Maureen. I was feeling a little nervous – not knowing her and so on – and lunch was a *little* sticky, but afterwards we took chairs and gramophones into the garden and enjoyed ourselves a lot. Maureen is a dear and I hope we get on good terms as I think we have a lot in common. At 3.15 I started off for Peggy's and arrived late of course. We trundled off to Bluebirds and I got a large blister, which didn't help matters. I didn't enjoy it quite so much this time – novelty wearing off I suppose. Afterwards I got taxi to Mrs Humms, felt horribly homesick and miserable, and recovered eventually and played Mah Jong to 1 pm.

## **Sunday Oct. 1**

Had my breakfast in bed and rose (rather painfully) about 10. Result was that there was a frightful skirmish to get off in anything like time. However we eventually rode off I high spirits and good weather – only to be damped literally and figuratively by terrific rain-storm. However we rode on and on in the rain to Bowali where we eat an enormous lunch at Mrs Cottons and rode back into more rain and hail. In spite of the dismal conditions we extracted a certain amount of girlish amusement from it all and I think all enjoyed ourselves.

## **Monday Oct 2**

Got up early and left Mrs Humms. Thank goodness. She's dear but I do hate being in other people's houses after sixteen years of it! Mummy arrived back in the afternoon or rather morning. And I got a note from Bill Berridge asking me to go to the flicks with him that afternoon. We went to the Roxy and saw "Bad Man of Brimstone" with Wallace Beery. It was rather fun and Bill.B. is so sweet. I think he's the nicest man in command. Much too good for her – I don't know how he puts up with her. I shall be getting all romantic about him soon which is *too* ridiculous. Mummy brought back encouraging news of Bareilly – Youth and Beauty!

## **Tuesday Oct 3**

Got a note from Maureen asking me to lunch and tea on Thursday so it looks as if we might have clicked. In the afternoon went to tea with Peggy and Bluebirds. Getting more and more bored with them and am thanking my lucky stars its so near the end. Peggy is very nice but I always feel so small and insignificant beside her which makes me tongue-tied and rather futile.

## **Wednesday 4**

Went with Cpt. Nehru to see "For Love or Money" at the Roxy. It was better than I expected, but I contracted some sort of visiting parasite whose short stay was nevertheless eventful!

## **Thursday 4**

Went up to College and did a fearful test which I got all wrong from start to finish. Came back here and at 12.30 rode up to lunch with Maureen. We looked at snapshots after lunch. God I do envy that girl. She's got the most terribly nice family. Cousins etc. lovely houses to live in, the best everywhere she goes and Niall for a brother! I suppose everyone has some compensations and everyone some drawbacks. Still I'd give a lot to be her – independent and adored by father and brother. She was very attractive as a child – more so than now I think, and Niall was sweet of course. We went in the evening to see "Having a Wonderful Time" which was odd, but I enjoyed it.

## **Friday October 6th**

I did absolutely nothing all day except work \_\_\_\_\_

### **Saturday 7th**

Jean Cookson's wedding to Roger Nicholson. It wasn't a particularly thrilling wedding and Jean was terribly nervous about it all and so looked a trifle grim. Niall was there in his kilt in which he looked absolutely ravishing, but at the cocktail party afterwards neither he or (*sic*) Maureen talked to me for more than 3 minutes so today I'm depressed. Especially as I had the chance of being in a party with them tomorrow. Mummy drank too much and was sick.

### **Sunday 8th**

As Mummy was going out with Mrs Blue-James - I asked Peggy Dowling to go for a ride and on to the flicks. She is small, dark and rather attractive, very talkative and lively and can be quite amusing. She is nearly 23 though she looks less. On the ride we pulled everyone to pieces and so thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. After tea Bill Berridge took us to the flicks and was in terrific form. I like him better every day but I'm sure his opinion of me decreases hourly. I often wonder - have I got a sense of humour? I have when I'm with contemporaries but it fades quietly out when it's most needed. I can think of a thing as funny in thought - rather obvious - but words come half a second too late. We drank at the boat club and then tottered up hill.

### **Monday 9th**

We played tennis with the Halfelds(?) in the afternoon which was very enjoyable - others present being Landers and Lovell-Smith - latter is extremely good and we had great fun. I do dislike that expression. Rushed home and changed and then hurtled up the hill to have dinner with the Pughs and play Mah Jong. It was v. cosy and friendly and peacefully enjoyable. We had dinner in front of the fire and then continued till about 12.30. Fraser, their infant, is a sweet child and they both seem devoted to him. It was the Cabaret Dance at the Club - but I don't think we missed much. Cotton is a singularly unpleasant specimen.

### **Thursday 12th**

In the morning Mummy had Lara Pugh, Mrs Lander and Mrs Donaldson to play Mah Jong. I played at the end and it was fun. I am writing on my knee hence peculiarity of script. In the afternoon we went with Nehru(?) to see "Berkeley(*sic*) Square" with Lesley Howard. It was a superb picture I thought and particularly so for me. It dealt with the "time theory". I still think and always will that there is no time - it seems so obvious that I can't get any arguments for it! Got an airmail from Betty in which she is frightfully depressed and miserable and announces her "semi-engagement" to Ernst - odd!

### **Friday 13th**

Went to tea with Barbara. They've got a lovely house and an adorable Spaniel puppy. After tea we rode along to Lands End. She got frightfully intimate and she told me all the nasty details of her affair with Freddy Stockwell and we gurgled and giggled and were in every way typical. But it was great fun (ugh)(?) and I think we both enjoyed ourselves a lot. Barbara is a funny kid as I don't know whether she's got a lot in her or

nothing. A little of both I think! She's very keen on George Boon, and thinks he is wonderful but I couldn't agree very heartily with her.

### **Saturday 14th**

A deadly day - had my hair done at Nancy Jacksons and then on to Bluebirds. Arrived v. late. Peggy really hasn't much idea how to cope with them.

### **Sunday 15th**

One of my blackout days. At least the first part was alright - we went for a long ride round by Snow View. In the afternoon we were going to flicks with Bill Berridge but he didn't turn up and we went by ourselves. "Adventures of Tom Sawyer" darn good. For no reason I got depressed and hurt and so didn't go up to dinner but wallowed in self-pity downstairs and wrote incoherent poetry.

### **Monday 15th** [(should be 16th October 1939)]

In the evening we went to see "Yellow Jack" with Bill Berridge. It was a wonderful film, one of the best I've seen for a long time. all about the fight against Yellow Fever and the attempt to find out what caused it. There was something terribly sincere and moving about it, and all the characters were so very real. The acting was superb - especially Robert Montgomery. I used to dislike him but now I think he's one of the best. Oh I would love to do research - I wish I was scientifically minded. Cancer research. Afterwards we had drinks with Bill at the Boat Club and stayed talking for about an hour. I do love him but am always very tongue-tied in his presence.

Nothing of the war seems to have been mentioned in this diary. But as a matter of fact, though no doubt history is being made and all that, it touches us very little here. Letters are so few, and news so scanty, that one would hardly know there is a war. Juliet wrote the other day, and seemed terribly upset poor darling. Haven't heard from Liza or Jill - I wonder how I shall like it in Bareilly - I wonder if I shall have any real affairs or have any proposals. I do so want to get on really good terms with a man of my age (about 23 for him) I do so want to feel perfectly at ease with someone like that. I don't want to get married or get violent or anything.

### **Thursday October 19th**

The Landers and the Bairds came to tennis. Niall had been ill so he watched and Godwin played instead. The tennis was good and Niall was very nice, but he looked desperately ill poor dear. Aroused the old protective instincts and so forth! He brought his camera, which is lovely but took no photos. The tea was simply frightful and we none of us could eat anything. Desperately awkward for everyone concerned. Bill came and watched - I do love him so. I think he's the nicest person I've ever met and the nearest to perfection. I wish Mrs B. wasn't coming out - too silly of me but she's rather a blot really.

### **Friday October 20th**

Barbara came to tea and we went on for a ride together - joined later by Yvonne. I discovered in the course of conversation with B. that she doesn't really like Yvonne much and considers her conceited etc. Its funny, I feel rather like that about her too. There are times when she annoys me more than any other person I have yet met (except Betty being mulish) because she's so cocksure. And in front of men she goes quite bats and childish and shows off like a 6 year old. Also the way she talks about her family is rather nasty. The trouble is I like her, and because I like her I hate her being so silly. But I've come to the conclusion I like Barbara a great deal more, and that she's got a lot in her after all!

### **Saturday 21st.**

Tennis at the Metropole - Gillespies, Col. Daw, Glad(?) Hobson (!), Lovell-Smith, Capt. Best, Miss Kinks(?) - + us. I only played once and then rottenly. We had a tremendous tea and it was all mildly enjoyable. After dinner Mummy and I tore down to meet Nehru and saw a rather mediocre film called "Comet over Broadway". Afterwards we met Bill Berridge, the Pughs, Ian Pitcairn-Campbell and Capt. Best at the Boat Club. There was no dance so we just sat there for about an hour. Capt. Best is a strange individual - very ugly with the reddest nose I've ever seen and spectacles. Very quiet in company like me but otherwise not too bad. Ian P.C. is rather a weak looking specimen.

### **Sunday 22nd October**

We rose at about 7.30 and by 8.30 and by 8.30 were on our way to Cheena [the highest peak near Naini]. We being Mummy, Barbara, Bill, Lara Pugh, Yvonne, Ian P-Campbell, Capt. Best and I. We got there at about 10 and had a terrific but chaotic breakfast at an angle of 45°. Bill cooked and distributed sausages and we girls smashed eggs with enthusiasm but not much accuracy. We took a good deal of photos which I hope come out, and spent the rest of the day lying on our backs and singing in a rather tuneless fashion "In the Cracks" as Bill aptly remarked. After packing we started down the hill and met Niall coming up. Poor dear, he had just missed us, but walked down with Barbara and I and took us down the most frightful places. I could hardly walk at the bottom. Yvonne's nose was a little out of joint.

### **Monday October 23rd** [Date preceded by a "doodle"]

Got news in the morning that we were going down to Bareilly on Thursday which I'm very pleased about. I know I shall be disappointed about the place and the people, but it can't be helped. Also got a note from Niall saying why he didn't come yesterday and asking me to go tomorrow. I just can't make up my mind whether he likes me or not and if he does how much. I don't think Maureen likes me much after all. What a blasted muddle life is. I can't even decide how much I like him which is even more involved. He's so intelligent but I do like him best when he's serious and he never is these days. I think about him so much and yet when I'm with him I don't care.

### **Tuesday October 24th**



Dropped in at Hawkesdale in the morning but it was rather a blob. Niall went on working, Maureen was aloof and neither of them really appreciated the historic picture I took of Peter and Yvonne up Cheena. In fact Niall said it looked as if they standing beside a muddy puddle in Kensington Gardens. Brute! In the afternoon I trundled off by myself to take the Bluebirds. They were absolutely sweet and I got on much better by myself, than with Peggy. They all kissed me goodbye and were too too touchingly devoted and upset at my going. I think perhaps I have got the quality of leadership to a mild degree at any rate. Photos returned and 2 of mine v. good.

### **Wednesday 25th**

My last day at College - rather chaotic on the whole. I forgot everything and crept off in the midst of silent farewells. I didn't like saying goodbye to them at all - my usual complex about "this is the last time". I wonder what they'll make of their lives - rather drab outlook for them poor dears. In the afternoon I went to the flicks with Yvonne and thought again how in a way she's a pathetic specimen. Her attitude to her family is a pity but understandable. We talked a lot - our attitudes have subtly changed and I think I'm now the superior where I was definitely inferior. At least that's what I feel. I don't know if she does. The film "Line Engaged" was excellent.

## PHOTO GALLERY

### VIEWS OF NAINI





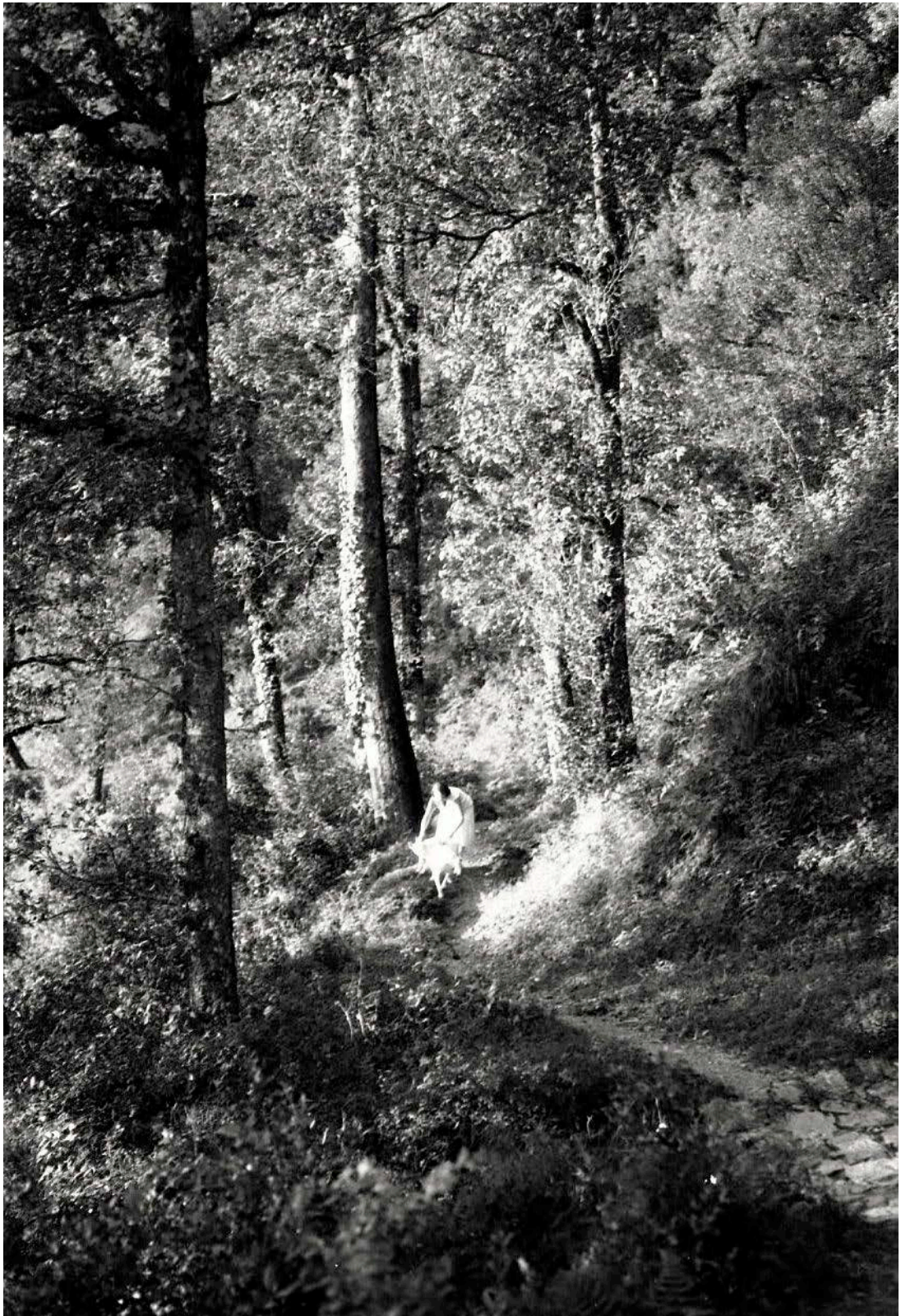




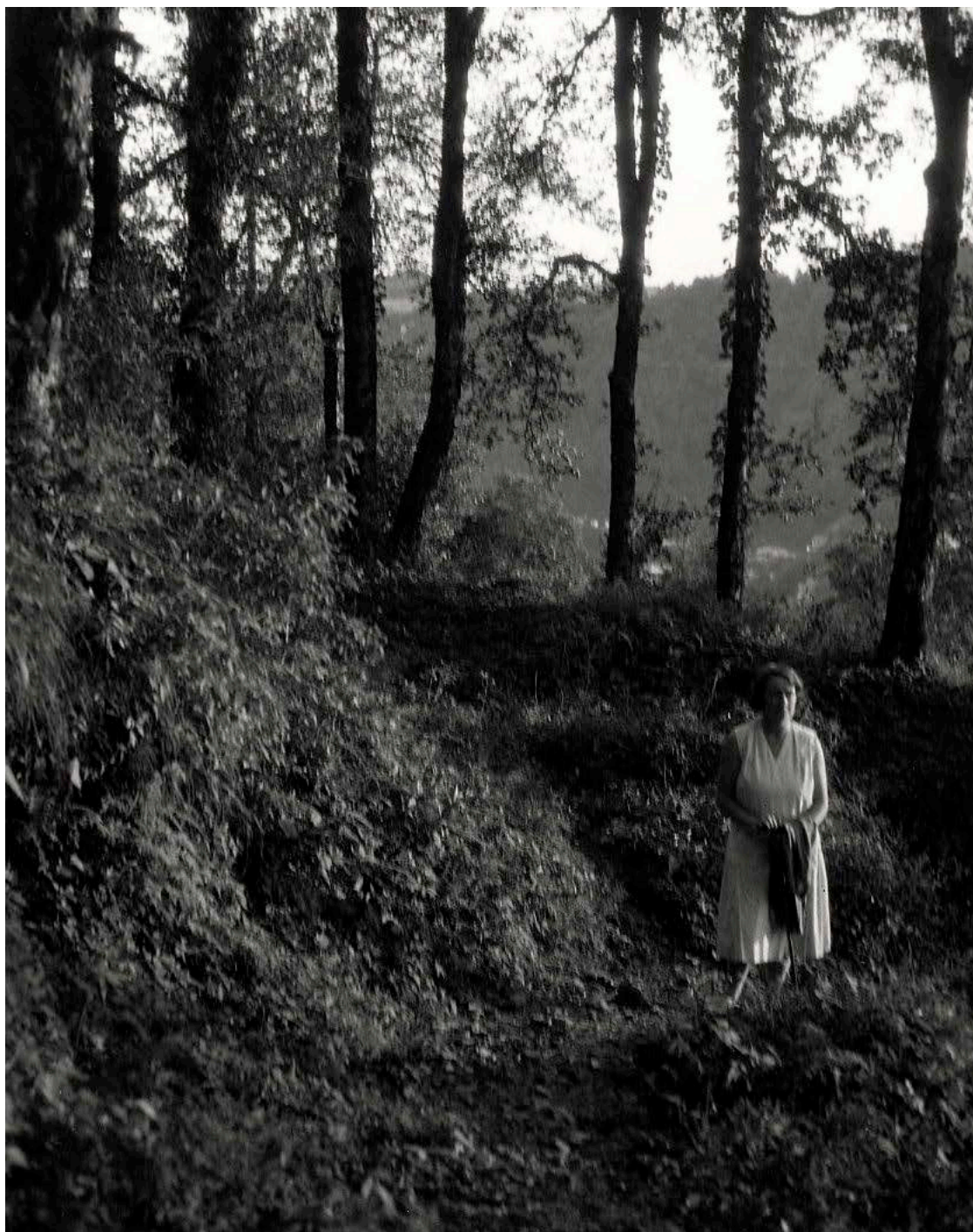
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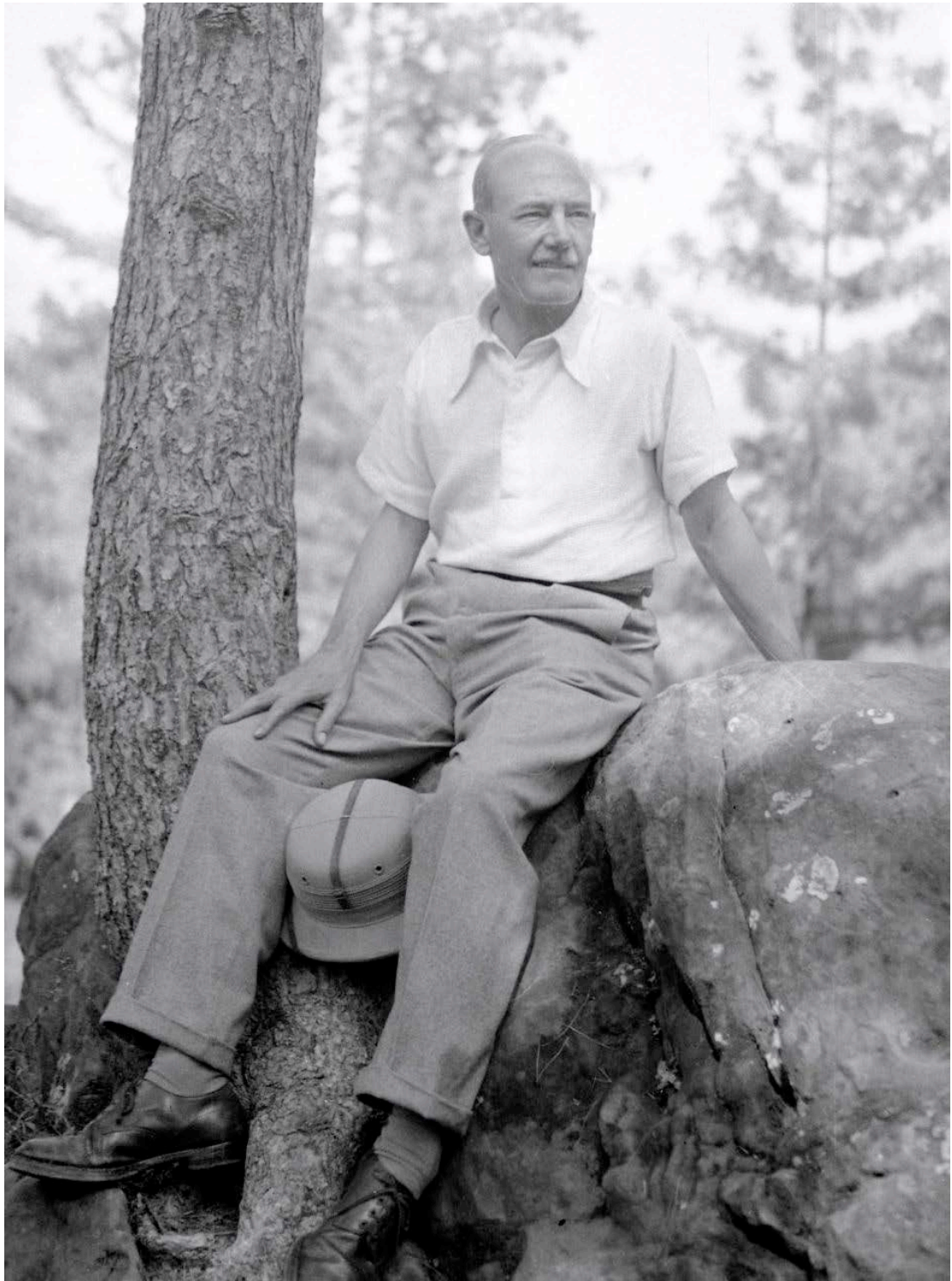




















‘WALKING THE DOGS’

IRIS







## VIOLET









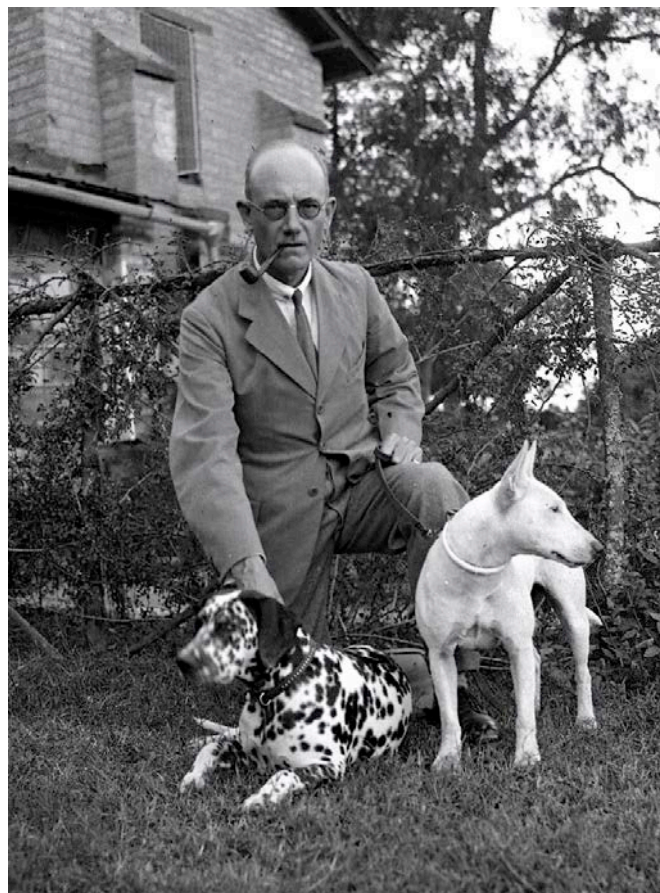




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VIOLET AND WILL

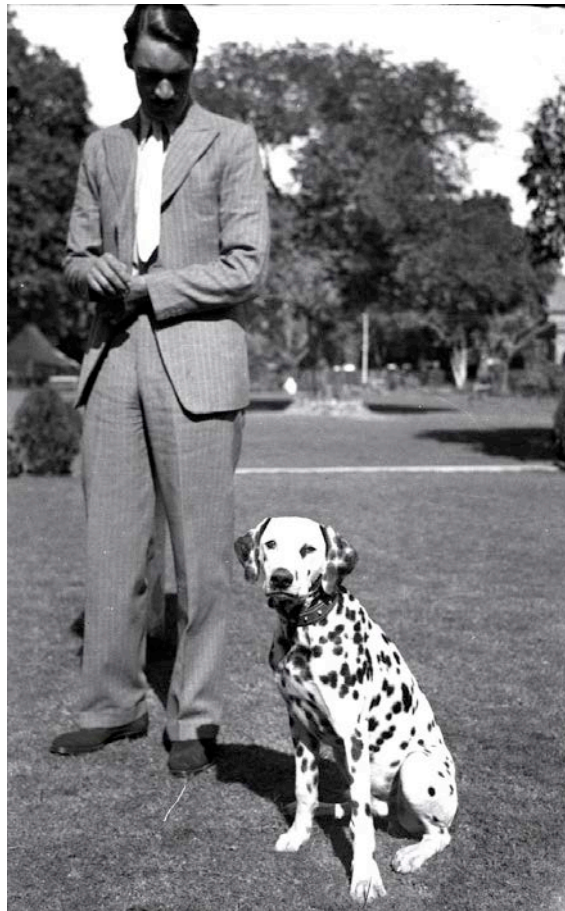


## DOG WALKER





## OTHERS







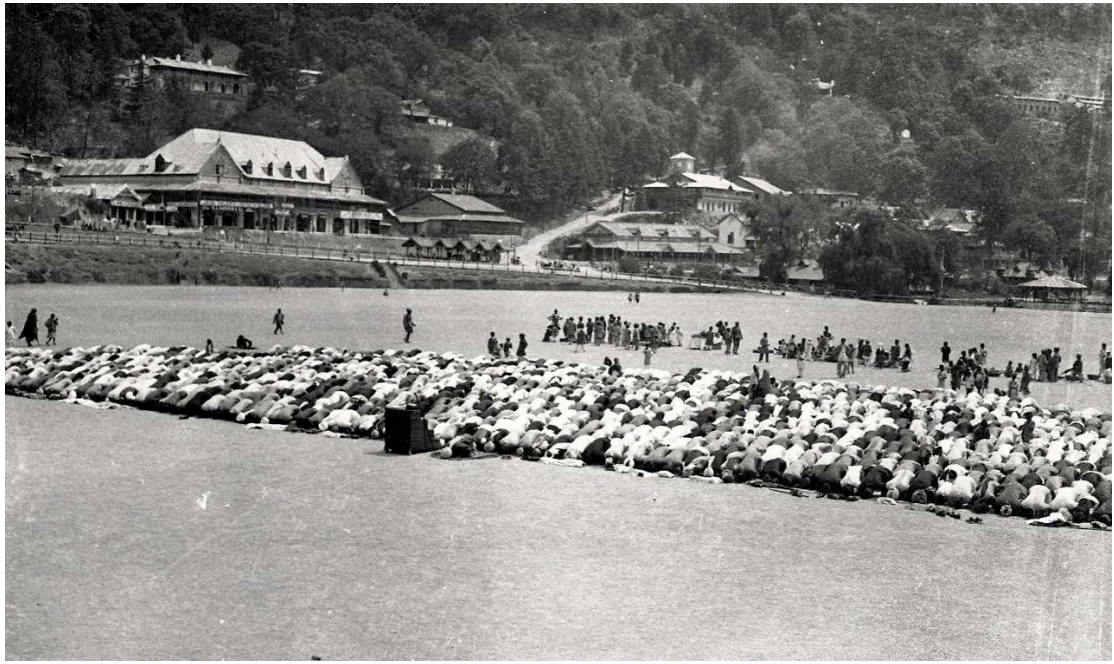




VARIOUS PHOTOS - to be sorted and added to when rest are scanned





















### 3 BAREILLY - 26 October 1939 - January 6 1940

#### Thursday 26th [October]

We came down, had a hectic morning packing and before lunch had drinks with Bill, who lunched with us. Afterwards we packed ourselves and dogs into the car and rattled down the hill, feeling most peculiar before long but not outwardly. We left at 3 and got there at 6 - a rather tiresome journey but this is India. Bareilly is absolutely flat, dusty and full of the Army. It's mightily hot too - I think, but apparently cool to what it has been. The tents will be quite snug I think but at the moment are distinctly primitive. Especially bathroom arrangements which are highly embarrassing for all. It is hot here at mid-day - it comes out of you in waves.

#### Friday and Saturday. [October 27 and 28th]

Spent in unpacking, arranging tents etc. Met Michael Mull Holland(?). Strange youth who came to Naini(?) and he seemed rather aimiable(*sic*), and said "One can do a lot in a month! in an ominous way. They are leaving then. So Yvonne won't get a chance of getting off with him - am I glad? I don't really know - perhaps! I don't know how one gets to know people here, it really is complicated. But still I can't expect anything for a week or two. If only I hadn't been led to expect so much! I wonder what I shall do with Yvonne if I don't know anyone by then.

#### Sunday. October 29th

Moved in. What a morning and what heat. I nearly expired and my temper was definitely frayed by the end of the morning. The tents really will look rather nice I think and it is a terrific help being so near the Club. In the evening Daddy and I went out to take in some films and ran into Ian Lander 1st of all, and afterwards into the Smythies(?) and Mavis whos(*sic*) car had broken down. We took them to the Club and afterwards I joined them there where we met Mummy, Bill and a Capt. Kennedy who I sat next to and like a lot. Michael M.H. joined us afterwards and as he was hanging about we asked him to dinner and went on to see "Pygmalion". The cinema was crowded with young hopefuls!

#### Sunday Oct.29th

Boring morning in which I did precisely nothing. I must find something definite to do with at least some mornings. Its awful waking up with nothing to do all day. In the afternoon we all three set off to pay golf, but after one shot Mummy retired storming and Daddy and I went on round. It was quite enjoyable and the course is dead flat so not tiring. My golf is as putrid as ever but on we plod.

#### Tuesday [October 30th]

Simply nothing - the future looks awfully blank - I suppose we shall get to know people eventually though there are of course the Landers and Pughs. I wish I could bump into some of the beautiful young men floating about. It would be rather a hoot(?) if I got engaged, though I don't want to get married yet.



### **Wednesday [1st Nov. 1939]**

We asked the Nicholson girls to play tennis. Mavis couldn't come and Mummy was laid low, so Daddy played instead. I was feeling like a piece of wet cement and couldn't move or hit a ball. Daddy ditto. Afterwards, just as we were going to get ready for our party, the Likemans(?) came in, causing fearful confusion everywhere and we eventually hustled them off rather rudely. There followed half an hour of complete chaos but we were miraculously in time. The party was a little sticky. Brig. Henderson is a perfect pet, rather quiet but oozing charm, and has a heavenly voice. Bill asked Lander and I and Anderson girl to play golf on Sunday. Boyds came late.

### **Thursday [2nd Nov. 1939]**

Bicycled round Bareilly with the dogs in the morning - most successful as they get exercised but I don't get tired. Afterwards we met Mavis and Berry Osmaston and we bathed together. He on second acquaintance is not the slightest bit attractive. I fancied him to be rather polished and witty, but he is actually neither. Met the Measures - she is brown, thin and very blue-eyed. She is a perfect dear - most friendly and sweet. He too seemed amiable. Don't suppose I shall see either of them again. In the afternoon Mummy and I played tennis with Bill and Col. Williams. This individual is more or less mute and what he says is completely ordinary. Very nervy and shy and definitely pathetic.

### **Friday 3rd. November**

Tennis off - Thank God. In the evening we went to drinks with the Darrell-Browns. They are a charming couple - she has perfectly lovely skin, eyes and voice and is sweet. He isn't much to look at, but nice. I met there a nurse of some description who is rather beautiful in a queer way and charming. Also two young oddments from the 52nd who seemed amiable but I didn't fall for either. Young men are so fatuous for the most part - and they bore me. It really is tiresome of me as they're the only people who are likely to take the slightest notice of me. Of course there are exceptions - I wonder if the Chief Exception really cares two hoots. I'm in the throes of a new love - its quite ridiculous!

### **Saturday 4th. November**

Bicycled round Bareilly in the morning and fell into the swimming pool. In the afternoon Mavis and Captain Kennedy came to tennis. It wasn't bad tho' I played as hopelessly as ever. I get so limp and depressed. They came to have drinks. Capt. K. is nice but quiet. Mavis is really rather brilliant at tennis. Its awful - I've been thinking over what I can do and I can't do a thing. I can't play any games well or any instrument, or swim or dance - what a life! In the evening went with Gen. McCrea to see "Wuthering Heights". Bill is an angel - the film was good but I couldn't concentrate.

### **Sunday 5th November**

Usual morning of dust and water. In the afternoon Bill picked me up and we went off to play tennis I mean golf with Lander(?) and Maureen Anderson. This latter is a bird Bill simply raved about. She is thin and quiet and just a little common. how(*sic*) I hate

that word. I don't know if I shall get to like her but I hope so. The golf was quite fun tho' I played lousily as usual. Afterwards we came back and had tea with Bill and Gen. McCrea came in and the 3 men told "drunk" stories for 1½ hours. I do wish I had stories to tell - I should love to do so, but I'm always too nervous. Maureen and I sat mum and felt foolish. She had asked Bill and Gen. McCrea and Lander to a cheerio so I felt frightfully out of it. Also feeling churned up, so went to bed.

### **Monday 6th [November 1939]**

Spent all the morning bundling in and out of shops, etc. Landed up at Halletts for drinks and Mrs Wakeley was also there. She's a dear - comfortable and placid and very kindly. Her voice tickles me and I want to giggle not because I want to but because its ticklish. Glad Hallett is an amazing creature - she seems dead set on Dan(?), and her own husband only dead 6 months. I must remember the joke about "Hobson's Choice". In the afternoon Bill picked me up again - this time the Pughs made up the four. I enjoyed it more today because they were worse, and I was better. Bills an angel - oh an angel. He obviously adores that limp and languorous wife of his!

### **Tuesday 7th [November 1939]**

I thought I had nothing to do all day, but at lunch Bill informed me I was playing tennis with the Andersons. Maureen is supposed to be an infant prodigy, but is actually rather poor. She is a funny kid. I don't see how anyone could get really intimate with her. Afterwards we had tea with him and were joined by Mrs. A. and later Gen. McCrea. At which point I hopped it. I don't know why I can never feel at ease with him - I think it's because I sense he's thinking how silly and insignificant I am. He's such a lonely little man and yet has more friends really than most people. A complex personality, interesting.

### **Wednesday 8th [November 1939]**

A day of contrasts - the first half perfectly miserable, the second rather blissful. It was the cocktail dance and Michael hadn't answered, and I didn't think we'd get a party and felt sick and morbid and depressed. However, the party was augmented from all sides, and everyone was sweet to me and lots of ravishing young men rolled up and I was really rather thrilled. Two young men in particular were sweet - Hornsby Wright and Dick Bartlett. I wish this regiment wasn't going away. I shan't see either of them again I don't expect. Michael was oozing with flatteries, but left me completely cold. "Love the unloving" - as always.

### **Thursday 9th [November 1939]**

Got a note from Mrs Gregory to play tennis. M. and D. played with Bill and Mrs Lander. We got hitched up with a ravishing young man called Murphy. He has a divine voice and a perfect figure and plays tennis superbly. The whole lot came back to tea and drifted off in batches. Bill stayed longest. My feelings for him are muddled and queer but I think very strong. In this case I think I am attracted not by any thing physical, but purely by his qualities. There are so many, many different ways of loving someone, but for me, in my brief experience, this is the most satisfactory. For love of

love or from hearts loneliness. In the evening we rushed off to see "The Challenge". It was a superb film - about climbing the Matterhorn. I loved every moment of him - it. Psychology! Met Michael who annoys me.

### **Saturday 11th. [November 1939]**

Played Mah-Jong in the morning with Lara Pugh and Maureen Anderson. Fun, and I won, only playing for love! In the afternoon had tea with an Indian, which was too fearfully boring, but they really are very nice. Then went out to see the Likemans. She was lying prone in bed looking frightful. What a sordid, suburban life - and shes only 30!

### **Sunday 12th**

In the evening we went to the flicks and Bill, Gen. McCrea, Lara and a young man called Murphy. The film was "The Man in the Iron Mask" and rather glamour-ous. I sat next to Murphy who is a dear with a delightful voice. Afterwards we went back to the Club and sat back and talked desultorily. I was half asleep as usual.

### **Sunday [12th November 1939]**

Bathed in morning with a crowd - girlish fun. After lunch played golf with Bill and Pughs - everything rather terse and tense at first but alright afterwards. In the evening we did a sort of Ouijah Charm(?) and it spelt out "I, James will marry Niall Baird in April" !! Too fatuous - and they thought it was wish-fulfillment!

### **Monday 13th**

Played tennis with Bill and the Andersons. I played appallingly and got depressed, in fact anguished. Had tea afterwards, joined by the Landers and sat gassing as usual. Maureen Anderson is really rather insipid and annoys me intensely on the whole. She sits there with her hair flopping about and says nothing, but giggles feebly all the time. I cannot see what Bill sees in her. Yvonne is coming to stay on the 4th and the lord only knows what we shall do with the child. But she has got something in her.

### **Tuesday 14th**

Got a note from Miss Lilly asking me to play golf tomorrow morning. Had a vague morning during which Maureen Baird came to see me. She is rather a dear, and I hope she likes me because it will help with Niall. As a matter of fact I'm rather forgetting about him at present but doubtless that will alter in the afternoon. She and Mummy and Capt. Kennedy and strange young man called Mitchell played tennis while I entertained Michael to tea. He is the sort of person one listens to without hearing and finds at the end of a long peroration - one is none the wiser.

### **Wednesday 15th**

Rose at some unearthly hour and scrambled off to play golf. I played very well for me, but was not appreciated. Miss Lilly had Mrs Dempsey with her and they were frightfully matey and "Well I said to him dear, I said "Why ask us if thats the way you're going on, I said, there's no need to have asked us I said," and d'you know what he said - - Etc. etc. I felt rather left out of this racy conversation but quite enjoyed it, though it



was fiendishly hot. Went back there to cakes and tea and on my way back lost my way and ground my way round Bareilly for 1½ hours before coming to earth. We stayed for the Cocktail Dance - I wasn't too keen but I hoped to meet Robert H.W, Actually I knew that I'd be disappointed, and I was. We danced quite amiably with everyone completely uninteresting and R.H.W' looked in and smiled and then went away again. I couldn't do anything about it but perhaps it was just as well like that. Funny how people I've hardly seen or spoken to impress me so maddeningly. Maureen Baird was there - the Landers do suck up to her. Murphy also only he didn't dance with me.

[New Diary headed: 15 NOVEMBER 1939, DIARY Belonging to: -

Iris Stirling Rhodes-James, Number 4., Cawnpore, 11.42. 6pm, Bareilly]

## **SHAJAHANPUR AND LUCKNOW (& CAWNPORE)**

### **Thursday Nov. 16th.**

Last night we set off from Bareilly and drove through the night to Shajahanpur(?) 50 miles away. We spent about an hour driving through the dark town looking for the place and arrived at 2am. This is a pretty desperate hole - very dusty and deserted with 2½ Europeans. We went over the clothing factory in the afternoon which was very interesting. Afterwards we went to tea with Corahams (? *Cora Hams?*). She is ordinary and nice but I didn't care for him much. Met Mrs Webster and went to see her daughter Elaine who was at College. A very attractive kid.

### **Friday November 17th.**

After a visit to a rather charming Mutiny church we set off for Lucknow with a picnic lunch. We arrived at about 4pm in a really sweet bungalow with roses twining round the door most romantically. We were invaded by scores of Indians and got a wire from Billy to say he is arriving this evening. I wonder if he will have changed much or find me so. I wish - oh well its no good wishing. This is a lovely place to look at - very dignified with sedate and glistening white buildings, broad roads and green trees.

### **Saturday November 18th.**

Billy arrived last night. He is exactly the same only plus a moustache which I don't like. We got up and played golf at 9am. I played excruciatingly. Afterwards went on to see the Boyds. Margo is engaged to a creature called Ronnie Machonochie - aged 28. I do envy her, it seems so funny to think of her getting married after all the conversations we've had about love and sex. She'll make a lovely wife and I do hope he makes her happy. In the afternoon I went to tea with Barbara. She is a great friend of Pam Pearson's! She doesn't seem to be having a frightfully thrilling time. Went to flick and Mayfair afterwards - quite fun.

### **Sunday Nov. 19th.**

We were taken round the Residency in the morning and though it was very hot it was fascinating. It is strange to think of them treading that very ground and the bullet holes being the actual ones. We had a priceless guide who had obviously learnt everything from a highly romantic guide-book. He kept up a flow of picturesque language and one felt like applauding his more purple passages. There was one particularly flowery one about "the flower of English womanhood" and "the little things only a woman can understand". Went to lunch with Boyds which was quite enjoyable and afterwards slept and read.

### **Monday Nov. 20th**

We were taken around the Lamar-tiniere(?) College in the morning. A rather impressive building with beautiful ceiling and wall work. In the evening we went to dinner with an Indian at which there were about 15 Indians of both sexes. I rather enjoyed it in a way. Some of these Indians are so very intelligent and authoritative. We let ourselves in for a flight on Wednesday which will probably nearly kill me if not quite. I fear I'm not a good example of courageous modern youth - clear-eyed and fearless. I have a strange sort of sullen courage somewhere.

### **Tuesday Nov. 21st.**

I've just finished a book which has engrossed me and impressed me for days - "Dangerous Ages" by Rose Macaulay. There is something horribly pathetic about the whole thing - the private misery and frustration of all the characters at their various ages and stages. Its cruel to think of all the beastly unhappiness that's in store. But there is - there must be - a balance of contentment and even moments of pure bliss. I wish how I wish I was a placid person. I would give up the heights if I could give up the depths too. Oh I want to write and I want to be of some use, but most of all I want to be wanted. I could be of some use to someone who would let me.

Everywhere I go I'm jarring against personalities - loving them perhaps or hating them - but never fitting in with them. Always trying to express the inexpressible, fight invisible foes, expose personalities that are not in me. "For we are, I know not how, double in ourselves ----" how true, oh God how true. If there were a God, if there were something definite that one could forget about most of the time but turn to when one needed steadying. If there were only some dark corner for everyone - somewhere to hide in in black moments. But does everyone have their black moments? How little we all of us know of each other and in our heart of hearts care.

I am at this moment trying to put into words a queer aching frustration that won't be explained. There's nobody I can turn to - for that matter has there ever been, not, really. I want to get away from my family and live my own life free of criticism and pity. I shall insist on going home next year. I must be free or I shall stifle. Oh I want to grow up, I'm sick to death of being impotent and helpless, and being pushed and dragged and bullied and watched. The people out here are not my type and I can't be interested in them or, I dare say, they in me. Reading about the other type worries and hurts and makes me long for that sort of life. Work and interest in social things and plays and books and discussions on life and Morals - that's what I want.

From "Dangerous Years"

Neville(?) brooding cynically over her private vision, to which Free Love had lead her, saw the sleep roads of the world running back and back and back - on or back it made

no difference, since the world was round - to this. Saw too a thousand stuffy homes wherein sat couples linked by a legal formula so rigid, so lasting, so indelible, that not all their tears could wash out one word of it. Free love - love in chains. How absurd it all was. One might react back to the remaining choice - no love at all - and that was absurder still since man was made to love. Looking at all her young, she was stabbed by a sharp pang of fear and hope for them: fear lest on some fleeting impulse they might founder into the sentimental triviality of short-lived contacts(?), or into the tedium of bonds which must outlive desire: hope that by some fortunate chance they might achieve some relation which should be both durable and enduring.

Has Barry squandered and spilt his love about as I have mine? Likely enough - likely enough not. Who cares?

Perhaps we shall tell one another all about it one day. Perhaps again, we shan't. What matter? One loves and passes and loves again. One's heart cracks and mends; one cracks the heart of others and those mend too. That is - inter alia - what life is for. If one day you want the tale of my life, Barry, you shall have it; though that is not what life is for - to make a tale about. So thrilling in the living, so flat and stale in the telling. Oh lets get on and live some more of it, lots and lots more, and let the dread past bury its dead.

### **Wednesday 22nd. [November 1939]**

I took wings for the first time - and Gosh did I loathe it! I felt sick and miserable and very frightened and came down after 4 minutes feeling very cowardly. So I made myself say I'd go up again tomorrow tho' the thought of it makes me feel so ill that I go cold all over. But I feel I must make up for my lack of nerve - ugh how vile it was! Got 3 letters from Jill, Betty and Liza. Former has fallen madly for her uncle and he for her - mad! Liza is going as a nurse or something impossible - the child is adorably vague. Barbara came to tea and we discussed Birth Control at great length and the other usual absorbing subjects.

### **Thursday 23rd**

The flying was off but is on tomorrow instead. I was infinitely relieved. We spent a vague day shopping and generally lounging around. In the evening we went to dinner with Sondhi(?) - a large, mostly Indian dinner party, with one or two common English people who were nice. Of course I'm in my element on these occasions, feeling patronising. If I feel at ease and respected I can talk quite intelligently and at times even humorously. The amount we had to eat was overwhelming and it make it worse to think of the poor starved old ladies who lie awake out of pure hunger. How I'd love to do something.

### **Friday 24th**

As Daddy had come back we decided to go to Cawnpore today. Spent the morning sight-seeing. Saw Imanbara - rather beautiful Mosque. But much more impressive was the Residency Churchyard. Something humble and pathetically resigned about all the tombstones. Especially Lawrence who "tried to do his duty". Afterwards we went on to Boyds and got back very late for lunch. Had a skirmish to get off. The road was dusty and crowded. But there was something strangely fascinating about this bare, flat, pitiless



country. Specially at evening when the pools flame and the smoke and dust is mistily purple and intoxicating. Very late here. Billy came to dinner.

### **Saturday 25th.**

Got up fairly early and after breakfast at the Club went off to watch the parade of the South Wales Borderers by Baird(?). I felt rather sick with anticipation at the thought of seeing Niall so obviously I haven't got over that little heart-throb yet. He looks absolutely angelic in his kilt - his figure's perfect. Mummy made herself obvious as usual and Daddy more so. Afterwards when we got back here, Nicholson's A.D.C. came and drank here and after a little went away and brought back Niall. Oh Lord, what a fool I am - he doesn't care for me, he was off-hand and cool and my feelings stifled me and made me dumb and nervous. Oh Niall.

### **Sunday 26th**

We spent the morning sight-seeing with Capt. Shah Bas Khan. Went round all the massacre places which were fascinating. He is an attractive intelligent Indian and very sure of himself. Afterwards we met Rollo Price at the swimming pool plus Sneezy(?). Latter was most affectionate and sweet. Rollo stayed to lunch and is a dear. Tall and dark and vaguely foreign-looking. In the evening (?) went to lunch (?) with Shah Bas and met a Col. Lockner and Major Richardson. Latter extremely nice - talkative and interesting and humorous.

*[\*The following paragraph is undated and written 3 pages further on. I feel reasonably sure that I am correct in assuming that it is a continuation of the Sunday 26th entry - it looks as if she accidentally turned over 2 leaves of the diary instead of going straight on to the next page.]*

\*In the evening Billy brought a lad called Frank Allen to dinner. He is shy and nice-looking and has very dark blue eyes. More coincidence - he knew us in Bordigera. Afterwards we joined up with Betty Harris for the dance. But because there was a big dinner we were the sole occupants. John, her brother is a funny little unattractive man with a terrific sense of humour. Others of the party were a queer couple - he looks like a red-Indian and she is slightly skew-eyed - v. nice. Also a policeman by the name of Plew. It was quite fun only would have been more so with a little more of the human element.

### **Monday 27th**

Betty came and spent the morning with us and we gossiped. I don't think I should like Barbara's or her life as much as ours. They go out more in the evenings, but the days must drag interminably. In the afternoon we took our tea with the Khans(?) to an artificial lake near here. It was rather fascinating and we arranged a picnic for tomorrow Moonlight - chilly but romantic. In the evening, at dinner, Major Richardson came and joined us. He really is sweet. His sudden and charming smile for no particular reason and his sincerity and the way he talks about non-army subjects - relief is striking!

### **Tuesday 28th [November]**

I've finished "Peking Picnic". It is a gorgeous book and if there was a little more about people and a little less about scenery it would have been perfect. Unfortunately I couldn't get up any enthusiasm about the leading character who is supposed to be so devastating. The language is beautiful "Can one stop people being hurt and had one better?" In her experience all the richest and most valuable things were mixed up, somehow or other, with being hurt as well: love affairs hurt (like the devil), marriage hurt, children hurt. And directly from being hurt, it seemed to her, sprang all qualities she valued most in others or in herself - courage, a measure of insight, and self-knowledge, and the secret sense of strength, of the indestructibility of the human spirit in the face of disasters, which is the most precious possession of all. All these things could only be had at a price, and cash in advance at that - the price of being hurt again and again, and sometimes almost to the point of extinction. Happiness was the fascinating honeyed flower of the soul, but the root was pain and the twin fruits, knowledge and strength. If pain were not so indissolubly bound up with all the joys he pursues who would seek it or reap its fruits?

We went to lunch with the Chapmans which was quite entertaining. John is really rather nice and I think a little bit attracted to me. I wonder - one imagines such an awful lot. Betty is looking so thin and pinched - I wonder if she's happy. She is so sweet and would make somebody a wonderful wife instead of all these empty creatures that get the men. In the evening we (family, Harrises, Sydney Plew, Victor Whitehouse, Frank Allen, Charles Trestrail and the Pearces) went for a moonlight picnic to an artificial lake. Rather fun. John definitely is attracted but in what way I don't know or how much. All very involved.

### **Wednesday 29th.**

Went round Elgin Mills taken round by Herbert Hill of Naini. V. interesting only we'd seen some others yesterday. The Shah Bay Khans and Mrs Chapman came to tea. He is really rather comic. I think he feels his colour and tries to be drastically off-hand. In the evening we went to a cocktail dance at the Club. It was John's party and 2 of the men wouldn't join in so he got very cross. He told me lots of reasons why he liked me - strange. I'm in a muddle. I like him but nothing more? I don't know. He isn't in love with Yvonne.

### **Thursday 30th**

We spent a thoroughly uneventful day before leaving. Billy came to tea and was rather quiet and sullen. It annoys me the way he's worshipped because he doesn't say anything worth saying and never attempts to go out of his way to be pleasant. Strange words to come from me but I'm sick of all this favouritism and they can't even talk about things that interest me. Oh well I shall get away from it all sometime and into the world that is waiting for me. Sounds positively futuristic and kingdom of Heavenish. Got into the train at 8 and had a v. restless night. Were 3 hours late at Bareilly and met by Nehru. Quite chilly here but it's good to be back really. Feeling queer - mentally.

## **BAREILLY**

### **Friday 1st December [1939]**

A vacant day in the morning unpacked and played my gramophone. Peggy Chatwin came in to see us, looking frightfully attractive and radiant. She's one of these people one reads about but seldom meets who radiate sweetness and happiness. What a very lovely wife she'd make for someone. In the evening Mummy and I went to see Bing Crosby in "The Star Maker". The film was futile but he himself rather perfect. He sang a charming song called "A Man and his Dream". There was a girl of about 14 in it with an amazing but not attractive voice, and a positively hideous face.

### **Saturday 2nd**

Usual quiet morning in which I finished a book which moved me intensely called "Frost in May". It was about a convent and reminded me so vividly of my own early childhood at Hazeldown. The intense religious atmosphere, ecstasies and doubts and oppressive sentimentality. And the desperate unjustness of perverted female natures. Mummy played tennis with the Bairds and Bill and they came back to tea. Niall was very sweet but terribly ill and depressed. He does need a mother so - We went along to a dance in the evening where he was and we sat and talked a lot. I like him much better in a serious mood - maternal instincts!

### **Sunday 3rd December**

From "Peking Picnic"

"He saw at last in its true perspective, or so he thought, his long-cherished attitude of aloof avoidance of sex and emotion - no longer as from something wise and lofty but as a thing in itself crippling and deforming. Saw at last that the secret of life is to abandon all our inner pretensions to superiority. Man cannot be a god; he must accept the normal human lot, with all the humiliations it imposes, the ardours, the pangs, the butterfly joys, and the long cold sorrows the small things with the great."

Mavis spent the morning with me and we gossiped - she is rather nice only I don't really know her very well. Attractive, silent and gay, shy and composed all at once. A queer mixture but aren't we all? Went to meet Yvonne at the station at 1. She looks the same as ever but is in a state of deep depression for reasons unknown. She seems to have changed a good deal - to be more composed and older somehow, not always reaching for the moon - I like her better like this. We discussed Niall and John Harris etc. at length - we definitely are susceptible to the same influences only I keep my feelings to myself.

### **Monday 4th December**

Mavis spent the morning with me again and we discussed and picked to pieces everyone and everything - dreadful habit. Maureen and Niall popped in. Awful lot of self-consciousness from female occupants but they didn't stay long. In the afternoon we went to their place for Croquet. The Croquet itself was awful - I felt beastly about my



leg and so on. Niall was very nice to me and Yvonne but I don't know who he likes best - He won't show and it matters so. I was rather rude to Dolly Baird so he probably loathes me. Maureen is a dear and they're so devoted its adorable to watch.

### **Tuesday 5th December**

Yvonne is queer - most queer. I think she's most terribly nice and yet oddly horrid. It isn't exactly horrid its pure unthinkingness and her lack of self-control. A funny childish streak that is difficult to point out but is such a pity. We played golf in the afternoon and I know she was looking at my leg all the time. Oh God will anything ever relieve me of that burning pain - I'm feeling on the edge of an abyss of extreme depression and this hovering about is pretty drastic. Dreadful are the growing pains experienced at Sweet 17. The ineffectual and incoherent speech is the worst burden.

### **Wednesday 6th Dec**

Went round to see Lara Pugh and arrange tennis. Afterwards we both got sentimental and wrote love poetry at length. Y. is quite convinced that Niall loves me better and I'm inclined to agree but that isn't saying awfully much. His first 2 letters are so charming but after that - ! In the afternoon we played poor but nice tennis with Mrs Gregory and a strange blonde female of exotic appearance but not much brains. In the evening went to a dismal cocktail dance in which our party was completely dead and most of the men wandered off to others. Felt miserable - Bill obviously is keen on Aileen Lander.

### **Thursday 7th Dec [1939]**

Wandered off to Lala's in the morning where was congregated Mrs Dempsey. We discussed clothes as if the future of the world depended on them. They went off to some sort of meeting and while they were away we got word of a book on sex manuals. It opened up a whole new world and I was very upset and shocked though I thought I knew everything. Spent lunch and tea with Maureen which was enjoyable. She seems to have come out a lot and to be really taking an interest in things and is infinitely more human. Arranged a party for Saturday. Went to Marco Polo in evening.

### **Friday December 8th**

We got up at some unearthly hour - 8 to be exact and after a hasty breakfast drove out to Isalnugger(?) to ride. I got the most frantically fresh pony which was almost impossible to hold in and I eventually got off and rode another. The country round there is lovely and perfect for riding. Came back at 12 and lounged about till lunch. Afterwards Yvonne went off to play golf with General McRea and I slept till tea. Maureen and Peggy both dropped in at intervals and talked. Peggy is feeling rather blue, poor love I don't blame her. Leaving ones whole life and possibly ones heart behind.

I'm absolutely certain now that I'm in love with Niall. But the thought of getting married yet is so absurd that I feel rather, in fact very doubtful if it will ever come to anything. I don't know what it is I like in him, his voice and his eye brows and his laugh. And the rather touching seriousness under all his flippancy. The fact perhaps that I feel his equal and his superior, and yet very much his inferior - all at the same

time. What is it about people anyway that counts. I don't feel completely hopeless about him but not frightfully hopeful either - ?

### **Saturday December 9th**

I'm writing this up from later so don't feel very sure of what happened. Mummy sang in the morning and we lounged about reading papers. After lunch Yvonne played golf and I slept till tea when there was the usual horde of people. We (Y. and I) went off to a party with Maureen at which were congregated Peggy, Ronnie Mitchell, Clive (!) Murphy, Paul Greenwood, and Alec Hallelay). Ronnie was in terrific form and Peggy obviously fell rather heavily. But he didn't and that's her tragedy - trying to make people fall who aren't inclined to. We went to see "Love Affair" which I enjoyed and afterwards went on to the Club and sat about, dancing to a rather desultory gramophone. I think the lovely Clive has fallen for Maureen - they'd suit each other perfectly. Paul Greenwood in spite of the name is disillusioning tho' very good-looking. Completely dumb and drinks disgustingly. Alec Hallelay is nice but not thrilling - fair hair, blue rather pop-eyes, round plump face and very cleft chin. Bill Berridge is obviously very keen on Aileen Lander and tho' I hate it I can't blame him because his better half doesn't give him enough love to light a candle with which is a mixed metaphor or something.

### **Sunday December 10th**

Had lunch with Maureen which was quite pleasant. I never feel completely at ease with her I don't know why, she takes such an awful long time to get to know. Sometimes I feel in a groping sort of way that I'm getting near her and then find that I'm further away than ever. I wonder if there's a lot in her - or nothing - They're a funny family - Niall puzzles me too in the same way that I feel near and far away and - well lost. People put up a barrier round themselves and one never knows if the self underneath is worth finding.

### **Monday December 11th**

A vague morning. In the afternoon we played tennis with "Blondie" (real name unknown) and Mrs Gregory. I played abominably, or even more so than usual. There were the usual crowd in to tea. In bed Y. and I had a long talk on religion - she's terribly sure of things. I wonder if I ever will be and if it signifies a stage further or behind, or perhaps everyone doesn't go through "stages" - perhaps some people never feel doubts. "You would not seek me if you had not found me already - " Who knows!

### **Tuesday 12th**

Maureen and Y. played golf and then we sat on the verandah and read. Afterwards they shopped and we parted. In the afternoon we played feeble tennis with Maureen Anderson - she is an impossible child and so brainless - I can't think why people like her. I think they treat her as a child. Hamish Souter(?) and Eric Rayner came to dinner - former is very sweet. I feel terribly sorry for Eric because he creates unnecessary hells for himself and I'm sure imagines things that aren't true and is so weak and easily hurt. Saw frightful film.

### Wednesday December 13th

Niall and Maureen came round in the morning and we arranged to play golf in the afternoon. When the time came I didn't get a chance to play with them so wandered round on my own. Went back to tea plus Sanderson and nice spectacled youth called Thornhill. Had tea, played Croquet and listened to gramophone. Felt vaguely dissatisfied afterwards. I don't think I made quite as good an impression as I might. "Was it something said - - " The scale of love is so finely adjusted that a look or a tone means the world - or nothing. Went to a cocktail dance which was quite enjoyable. Clive most amiable, also beautiful Teddy Humphries. The one I like best is Desmond Badham Thornhill. Had a strange conversation with minute object who said he was disillusioned about love and he liked women with pasts - all in one breath! Also dashing Major who told me he was looking for a wife but had nearly given up the unequal contest. Saw Yvonne off at the Station - regretfully because I like her but vaguely thankfully.

### Thursday December 14th

Maureen and I played tennis with the Marker in the morning and afterwards played some records. Alec Hallelay came round and sat for some time. He's a dear though not attractive and might be useful. Quite a strong sense of humour too and likes me. Had my hair done in the evening and missed Maureen who came to tea - I'm now sitting in front of the fire contemplating a peaceful supper in the warmth - "One wandering thought pollutes the day - " What it is to be young and in love!

If you should some day turn and read my thought  
The Secret of my life - the love of you -  
Catch me as I have wanted to be caught  
Watching you, ~~half-alert~~ proudly, wildly, for some clue  
Of your heart's message. If you should turn and see  
~~Written in the~~  
The bitter longing underneath my eyes  
The chains that bind me and yet leave you free  
The dreams, the short-lived joys, the sick surmise.  
If you should see all these and seeing know  
For ~~just a second~~ what this burden means  
Would you relent a little. Would you grow  
Gentle and lover-like. And would the scenes  
Of past encounters stir you with the pain  
Of things desired and lost and hoped for still.  
Would you be changed. Or would you just remain  
Aloof, impersonal, perhaps more chill  
With faint disgust at what my soul had shown  
Its best for both of us I see  
The pity, half contempt and I am thrown  
Lucifer-like into my blackest well.  
What would you do my darling  
If you knew?



Oh God, if you have anything to teach  
Teach me  
If you can reach me  
How to breach  
The gaps in speech

[Half a dozen little drawings of male and female heads are also on this page]

### **Friday Dec. 15th**

A lovely lovely day and one that I will never forget as long as I live. Maureen came in the morning to practice tennis and asked me to play golf in the afternoon with Niall and Williams. However we changed it to tennis and Niall and I took them on and got one set off them. It was grand fun and Niall was so sweet and I felt at home somehow. I went back to tea there and afterwards we played the gramophone and talked. General Baird terrifies me and I lose all control of myself in his presence. He's a cruel man in some ways. I wonder if its in Niall too but could be controlled and be made only amusing. At 6.30 Maureen and I went off to sing carols and Niall went round the messes and returned very talkative and angry and childish and old and helpless and assured - all at once. We got our car and went off to the cinema and it was bliss being so near him, particularly in his rather priceless mood of being very sleepy and confidential and repentant and suddenly angry about nothing. I felt so happy and comfortable with them and then I suppose it'll be nothing!

### **Saturday Dec. 16th**

One wandering thought pollutes the day - the thought in this case being that we weren't in a party for the dance. I spent a lazy day doing precisely nothing - Mummy got into the tennis final and rather an attractive boy came to tea - surname Maud. When evening came it was toss and go whether we should dance or not, but I felt that it only needed courage and will, and I did it. The first part was agony, but we soon got going and Desmond B- Thornhill is a dear - ditto Alec Halliley. I hope we play.

### **Sunday Dec. 17th**

Got up very late and did nothing till lunch. In the afternoon played paralytic golf with Daddy and then went to watch the tournament. Mummy won but tore a ligament and had to retire afterwards. Will be in bed a week - Niall was watching and came back to tea. He is a dear - very considerate and unselfish but a tiny bit conscious of his own piercing beauty. But who wouldn't be. Its amazing how much happier some people are than others.

### **Monday Dec. 18th [1939]**

I'm feeling dead tired, rather depressed and very much in love. I wonder what it is in loving that is important and if one can make anyone else be in love with you. Wanting somebody terribly badly is such a blurring sensation and seems to shut one off from other people. It even shuts one off from the one person - I wonder how much I would be hurt if Niall went away and never wrote or if he fell for somebody else. Terribly for a bit but I imagine it would wear off. I wonder if I should show him a little how I feel.

I wonder if in everything that's worthwhile he sees me as I him. I know him hardly at all and yet he is everything that I have ever known or wanted and more than that. He's weak in some ways and casual and quick-tempered - he's selfish too I think and moody, very. He could be beastly but he would repent afterwards and he's very susceptible. His capacity for affection is terribly deep but to solid things, family things. I think in love he'd be possessive without knowing it but heart-rendingly devoted and jealous in a quiet, unobtrusive way. We haven't very much in common really, and our backgrounds are hopelessly different. That's the material - and the answer? God only knows. But whatever happens I will not be bitter or blame anyone or thing and I must realise it's right.

Maureen came round in the morning to see Mummy. In the afternoon played tennis with Thornhill and strange youth and I couldn't hit it at all. Thornhill is nice and attractive somehow. Nehru came to (play tennis!) say goodbye. Wonder what McLeans are like.

### **Tuesday Dec. 19th**

Shopping in the morning - In the afternoon I played tennis with Clive, Mrs Murphy and youth called Alexander. Clive is really perfect bodily - I played slightly better. Alexander is nice but has bad teeth and one of these "Midnight" Scotch accents. Early dinner in front of fire - pleasant.

### **Wednesday Dec. 20th**

Played golf with Maureen in the morning. I enjoyed it because she is hopeless and the climate at that time is lovely - cool, and hazily sunny. After we had played about six holes we collapsed behind a rose bush (in the fond hopes of being hidden!) to watch a parade. The troops marched vaguely round but without any particular purpose but we didn't see Dolly Baird at all. We talked quite a lot about various things - she is funny and sometimes, when I'm being cruelly truthful, I ask myself if I'd like her if she wasn't anything to do with Niall. I think I'd like her but I wouldn't be so desperately anxious for her to like me. Rode in the afternoon with Desmond Badham-Thornhill who is angelic - he has produced an awfully nice horse which I am going to ride tomorrow. He is a quaint boy, and one I feel very much at home with.

### **Thursday 21st**

This is weeks later and I really can't remember what happened. Oh yes I was bitterly disappointed because I had thought I'd see Niall. He came round last night and saw Mummy (?!!) and said I was to go round this morning. But Maureen came round and didn't suggest it so I tried not to hint. Its queer how he makes up my whole life and how a day is spoilt or made according to his appearance.

### **Friday 22nd**

McLeans arrived. The girl is 20, not very attractive but passable and seems v. nice. Just what I wanted in fact. Mother is nondescript and very bossy, father ditto and silent. Both pretty useless. In the evening we went to a drinks party at the Marshalls. I got more or less wedged into a corner and had to be long-suffering with certain bluff and

brainless specimens. Not particularly pleasant. McLeans came to dinner and all talked at once. Afterwards I went to a flick with Desmond. I am glad to say he didn't paw me about as Alec did the other night. Funny - I hate any forms of love-making and I often wonder if Niall tried any I should like it. Alec is queer - I'd never have suspected him of that sort of thing but I suppose its his age. I'm writing this flat on my back hence queerness.

### **Saturday 23rd [December1939]**

Alec asked me to play golf but I refused. I think he really is a little taken with me, probably out of sheer desperation. He came in to tea and stayed for some time. McLeans and him came to dinner and afterwards we went to the dance. At first it was pretty awful but after a bit I really got going and enjoyed it all terrifically. Met an adorable young man called Whittingham who danced with me several times and seemed taken but it was probably "under the influence". I do forget about Niall at times but only for lack of encouragement.. Alec is, for the moment, taken by storm.

### **CAMPING**

#### **Sunday 24th**

Got up with difficulty at 8 and rode with Desmond. Highly enjoyable. I like him more every time and quite platonically, which is restful. Betty and Frank arrived and after breakfast we set off for camp. The journey was shattering - clouds of dust and spine-tearing humps. Arrived at 3 to an enormous lunch and lovely decorated camp. Other members of party include:-

Tony Brett - smallish, rather attractive, very humorous, nice smile and eyes, all for Nicholson girls.

Philip Coke (Cocoa) - tall, lovely figure, queer but attractive face, quiet, sense of humour, only keen on shooting.

Capt. North - tall, burly, blue-eyed, very nervous with peculiar twitch, terrific sense of humour - a pet.

Capt. Cooper - small, grizzled, beautiful Oxford accent, quiet but the life and soul of party on occasion.

Billy, Frankie, Aileen Nicholson's parents etc.

The journey there was terrible and took us about 4 hours through sand and ruts and ghastly atmosphere. When we got there the camp was very decorated and pleasant and all beautifully organised. We had a vast lunch and then the others set off for the geals(?). Noreen, Aileen and I went off on an elephant - it was grand and quite comfortable. I think this life is just perfect for a bit - a month would be heaven. Came back to an enormous tea and afterwards went off for baths. Aileen is a queer girl. I don't think there is a lot in her and she (to me) is quite lacking in any sort of attraction. Dinner was fun. Tony Brett is really rather a priceless cove and Capt. North angelic. Afterwards we played Consequences but I was terribly sleepy. Alec is too ridiculously blatant. It annoys me and faintly disgusts me too. Coke attracts me most at present. After dinner we played Consequences again. Dinner was a pretty riotous meal. I sat next to Tony Brett and afterwards he came and sat next to me. I don't think there's anything in it but he seemed rather quieter than usual. I went to bed fairly early.



I've forgotten the fact that it was Christmas. It didn't feel like it, but it was the happiest I've spent for a long time. I don't think I thought a religious thought all day. How life, and oneself and one's ideas alters.

## Tuesday 26th

I didn't attempt to shoot but Cynthia, Aileen and I went down with the others and I slept all morning. The grass was lovely and the sky very blue and the sun very warm. They got a good bag - Alec I think is turning off me but Tony turning on - in the morning noticed little things - the way he always came and stood next to me, was slightly shy in my presence, watched me when I wasn't looking - oh just things that might have been all imagination but were noticeable. After lunch the others went off shooting again. We slept and at 5 we went off on the elephant. It was another dizzily lovely evening with a full harvest moon and the rushes black against the evening sky. Came back to large tea and afterwards had our baths and eventually dinner. At dinner I sat next to Billy and Captain Cooper. Latter was rather quiet and we had an interesting but serious conversation about books. He's really rather delightful. After dinner we had a treasure hunt and I went with Cocoa (P. Coke) I was singularly unintelligent but he was brilliant. This was followed by Murder in which I attacked him but was immediately caught. We then settled down to hysterical Charades - our side contained the 3 wits of the party (Tony, Cooper and North) Cynthia and I. We did the same scenes over and over again to different words and became weakly hilarious. We finished this at about 2.30. Mummy became restless and annoyed and wanted me to go to bed, but I refused. We four girls congregated in our tents and were soon attacked from all sides and from above by the rest of the camp. They were on our tent so the obvious thing which we did was to bombard them with boots, fish, etc.

However, this soon palled and we climbed the tents ourselves and got firmly installed. It was here Tony became obvious. I found (?) myself next to him and he immediately started to (absent-mindedly of course!) play with my hands. I found that I liked this and so, apparently, did he because we settled down quite happily firmly clasped. I was lovely up there, his hand stroking mine, the moon shining, full, through the leaves, half-listening to everyone else's conversations, half just not bothering to do anything but feel. Definitely one of the heights.

This blissful interlude was interrupted by Mummy coming up in a flaming temper and hurling bricks at me. I tried to avoid her but she was furious and I had to go. It made me seethingly, hotly, resignedly unhappy. Why is it that she can't see me enjoying myself without wanting to frustrate me. I think it was because she wasn't the centre of everything and so she didn't want me to be happy. Luckily I've had time to cool down but otherwise my language would be unprintable. I can't understand my feelings about Tony - I don't think I need take him seriously because he was a little tight. A queer, intensely happy, strangely miserable day.

## Wednesday 27th

As beastly as yesterday was heavenly. The others went off shooting in the morning, while Aileen, Noreen and I lay about sleeping and talking. Tony was silent and wistful and unhappy so perhaps he did mean something. How is one to know and if one does - what then? At lunch I'm sure he expected me to give a sign, he looked rather like a lost spaniel and I could have helped but I only laughed and avoided him and felt sick inside because it was all over. Afterwards I took photos and eventually goodbyes came

and oh my God, I never even looked at him. Something inside me panicked and I completely ignored him.

The journey back was dull and dusty and I felt exhausted mentally and physically. I just couldn't be bothered to work out my feelings till after and only knew that I wanted more than anything to see him again. Dinner was frightful and I went off to bed while the others went into the bar, Felt infinitely, sickly unhappy and when Mummy came back she said he'd been at the bar! I could have cried my heart out but felt too tired and hurt - inside. What has happened to me - I'm in love with Niall and yet I've gone and cracked my heart because someone held my hand for 10 minutes on top of a tent. Lord I'm crackers.

## **BAREILLY**

### **Thursday and Friday [December 28th and 29th 1939]**

Dead days in which I recovered, by degrees, my balance, and slept most of the time. Alec seems to have turned to Aileen absolutely, which just shows his mentality and outlook are so not mine. Being really honest I must admit that it did jab me a bit at first, but it was entirely my fault and anyway he doesn't attract me in the very slightest. Quite a lot of people here I wouldn't mind flirting with in spite of Niall, but not Alec. The funny thing is I feel he's going all out on Aileen purely to show me he doesn't care how I treat him, and that under it all he prefers me. This is probably my own conceit and justification for my lack of attraction.

### **Saturday Dec. 30th**

Nothing happened till the evening and then quite a lot happened. The Nicholson girls arrived at about 6 and we clambered off and climbed into our (shoes!) clothes later. I looked rather nice, but so did everybody. The party was terrific and dinner a riot. I sat next to Niall on one side, who seemed depressed, and I don't think somehow he liked my gaiety overmuch. He seemed dazed and wanted to be serious all the time, but what could one do, though I wanted to too, sweet darling. I danced with him about 4 times and I know now that he isn't in love with me - he's unable to hurt badly yet, but when he goes away - ! Alec danced all evening with Aileen and North seemed rather taken with Cynthia. Noreen was popular all round and I had Desmond. The next night we went out to the Institute and Alec danced all evening with Eileen and not once with me.. In fact I was miserable most of the time because of being very much out of demand and Noreen the centre of everything. Alec is peculiar as there's most frightful tension between us entirely of his own making and I don't quite know what about.

So, the year drew to its close - and what a year. The most full, happy, tragic, important year of my life. What have I done with this year - its pretty ghastly to think what I haven't. Of course I've met Niall and I've lost most of my shyness and I've got quite a lot of new friends. And I've started golf. And I've lost a grandmother. And all this has led me - where? So much for all my high ideals and noble vows at the end of last year. Poor, frail, pathetic human endeavour! Where shall I be - we all be - this time next year?

## **1940**

### **January 1st. Monday [1940]**

We stumbled off, bleary-eyed to see the parade. It was very enjoyable and Niall looked lovely and rode beautifully. These things always give me chokes which is weak but only human. Afterwards we went back and drank in company with Desmond, Brian North and various other oddments. Getting a bit sick of this continual debauchery and longing to get back to England and normal. I'm perfectly happy but just restless because of the futility of the whole racket

### **January 2nd - Tuesday**

Rode with Desmond in the afternoon. He is a pet and has a terrific sense of humour. If only he didn't have to wear glasses he'd be darned attractive. In the evening we went to drinks with the Measures. As drinks go it was rather an enjoyable party. I got off with old Measures who asked me to ride tomorrow and is going to give me a saddle. Mair(?) Jones of Naini was there and proved very sweet and is going to ride with me. Funny how I seem to have grown so much older even since I've been in Bareilly - I'm accepted by people.

### **January 3rd - Wednesday. (1940)**

Rode with Measures - quite pleasant only a bit strained - intelligent conversation about birds and plants and the weather. In the morning Maureen came to see us. Also Clive plus a tiny hare he found. Its desperately cold these days. In the evening Sam Kennedy asked us to a party - when we arrived there were the most ghastly lot of haggard individuals congregated. I eventually left it and joined Desmond, Alec, Cocoa etc. Latter is so blasted attractive but completely unmoved by my fatal fascination. Finished riotously at 1p.m. (Presumably it was 1 a.m.?)

### **January 4th - Thursday. (1940)**

Rather perfect day in some ways. Rode with Mair Jones in the morning which was nice. She is quaint. I wonder if she had an unfortunate love affair or just never found the one and only. Played Mahjong with Mrs Whiteside which was mediocre. Found Alec had been round - it seems to be alright between us now. I told him I knew about Eileen and he blushed furiously and looked relieved. Played tennis with Alan Coombes, Niall and Maureen afterwards. Didn't enjoy the tennis but afterwards went to the flicks and sat on the edge of bliss and the centre of a sofa with Niall. He is quite poetic and oddly apt. He showed me some modern poetry of his, written to Joan Davis. Quaint idiot. Went to dinner with Col. Williams - he is quite the most pathetic thing I've met for ages. So self-conscious that ones pity just has to turn to annoyance, and yet he can't help it so one must only pity. I can't see why he can't go to a psychoanalyst and make his life a little brighter. He played the loveliest records but I saw in them only the escape for a frightened, frustrated soul, and so they became infinitely pathetic.

### **January 5th - Friday. (1940)**



A lovely morning which cheered me up for the rest of a rather unhappy day. I played golf with Maureen in the morning before breakfast, which was rather perfect and I didn't play at all badly. She asked me to go round after and have tea. I felt a little nervous but happy. When I got there we drank tea and ate cakes and Niall came along in terrific form. He's so sweet when he's excited and bumptious - almost as sweet as when he's utterly depressed. Later Gen. Baird came along and frightened me but was v. nice. We played croquet(sic) and laughed a lot. In the afternoon I slept and felt ferocious when I woke up. Eileen played tennis with Cocoa so he obviously likes her better. I can't see what people see in her, she never says anything that isn't a repetition of ones last remark. Hopeless child. Got a note from Desmond and went to the flicks with him. Even he isn't really fond of me its merely a last resort. I've never been really loved - the sole centre of anyone's adoration. How am I ever to get married - oh lord, supposing I never do, never get the chance or have children - oh God no.

Saturday 6th Saturday (January 1940)

Maureen, Mair Jones and Clive came at various stages of the morning. I gave Maureen a poem I'd written to Niall, rather guiltily as I thought it might be considered too feeble. The answer came in the afternoon - he didn't say it was good or funny or anything so I was a little hurt. He wrote one himself however which was rather brilliant - darling angel, he's so bally brainy. In the evening there was a terrific party at the Club given by the Doqras(?). I was nervous at first, but actually enjoyed it more than most. Alec, though he adores Eileen is now quite at home with me - knowing I know and laugh at him! Brian North is as hysterical as ever and very attractive under, or over, it all. Dick was nice but danced with Noreen all night, and Desmond sweet - and danced with me. Also Gerald Noogwort(Woogwort??) of Naini turned up and was charming - great improvement here. Coko was, however, the heart-throb of the evening simply because he's so maddeningly unresponsive. Sometimes I think "Oh that shows something" and then he goes and does the same to someone else.  
Life - !!

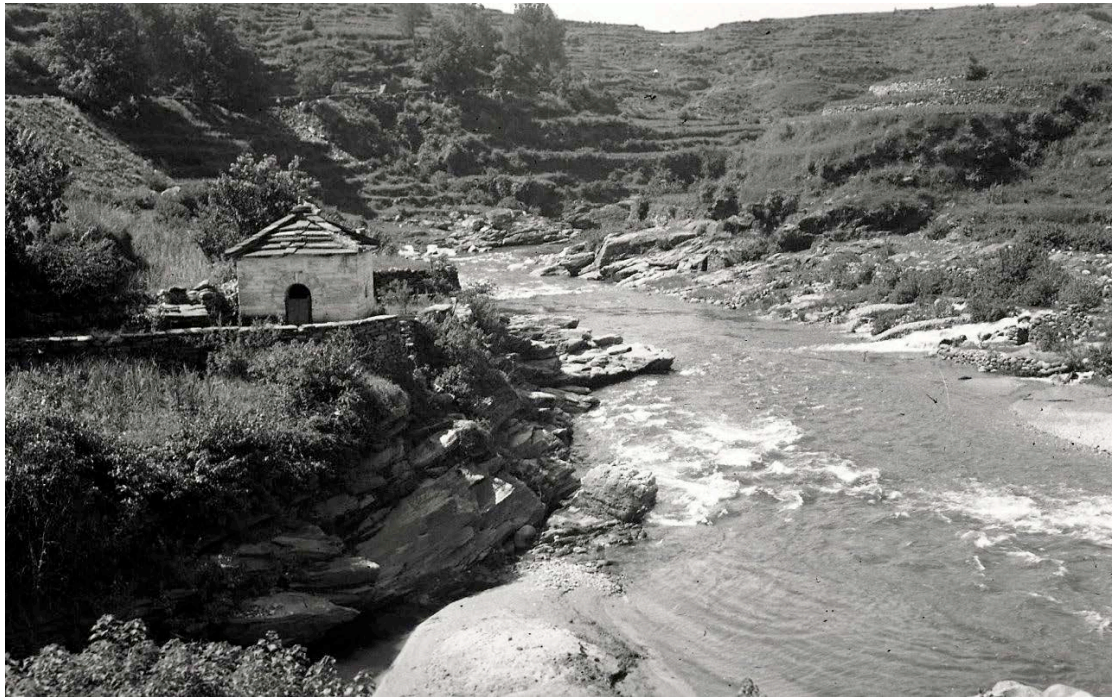
WILLIAM RHODES JAMES - ON TOUR ETC.











## 4 AGRA - January 7 - February 24

Sunday January 7th - (1940)

After a chaotic morning trying to pack we got off at 11.30. The journey to Agra was dusty and dismal and we got here at 5 or so. The Taj Mahal was rising mistily pink out of a haze, looking ethereal and very lovely. We went and took a closer view and it was perfect - a pearl, a sea-shell, massive and yet airy, brooding; immeasurably calm. In the evening our baggage failed to arrive so we had dinner in front of the fire and I retired to bed in a ferocious temper and Maj. Riddle's pyjamas!

Monday January 8th - (1940)

I really must do something about my writing - its getting excruciating and going backwards. Horrible light on my untruthful self. We did a lot of sight-seeing which I can't cope with now. Is this writing any better. No worse. Oh lord. Well - in the morning we went round the Taj Fort. It was exquisite and quite beyond description. There was a brooding, sun-filled calm about the whole place as if gentle and romantic memories were clinging to everything - infinitely gracious. The little white mosques dreamed in the sunshine and through every gap the Taj Mahal shimmered like a pearl. A really beautiful honey-like calm streamed round a (and?) through it all, and the ghosts of dead loves and hates and intrigues seemed to hang about, benign with the years. In the evening we went to see the Taj which was floating in an opal mist, poised, so it seemed for flight. Its the atmosphere of the place that hits one - as if the thoughts of countless worshippers of beauty have felt on seeing it were still hovering round and instilling into it a new intangible beauty.

In the evening we went to a cocktail dance at the Club. There were quite a lot of young men but Yvonne's John Davis is completely unattractive in my opinion and doesn't seem to care for her too much. I wasn't enjoying myself too much until a creature called Tony Beck blew up or in, and seemed to take rather a fancy to me. Anyway, danced all evening, and asked us to go to the flicks tomorrow. He is dark and slim, quite attractive, quite mad and not really my type at all. Still it is faintly amusing to be taken round and appreciated and causes much female giggles and I think jealousy. Desmond, Dick and Peter Campbell came till 2a.m.

Tuesday January 9th - (1940)

At about 11.30 we ambled off, to Fatepur Sikri plus Yvonne. The journey was very pleasant and we got there in about an hour. It is a lovely place - Kipling's deserted city, with crumbling red walls and dim vaulted corridors and big sunny courtyards. Full, as everything there is, of ghosts. We wandered round for about an hour and then had lunch in a shady courtyard overlooking hot, wide plains. There is a sombre serenity about these places that acts as a drug to one's senses, but at the same time a tenseness that exists. After lunch we started off again but I got suddenly cross and weary so didn't appreciate the beauties of the place. We saw a whole lot of little boys jumping miles into fetid green slime which was faintly disgusting but necessary. Got home at about 4 and after tea went to have our hair done. The female is Eurasian and has had smallpox and a husband who deserted her. Got home to find Tony had been ringing up almost incessantly and arranged a flick - Yvonne and Cowan boy were added to the party.

After complications and delay we got off to the flicks. Tony and I sat at a respectable distance and I enjoyed Jack Buchanan but realised I don't adore him no longer. (sic). Afterwards I sat with Tony in the front of the car and he held my hands and became goofy. We paddled off to see the Taj, and though there was no moon it was rather a gem, a huge shadowy mass under the stars. Tony and I sat down on a marble ledge and he kissed me fervently several times. Funny - I still don't get any thrill from kisses - much more from hands. I always wonder if I'm making myself cheap on these occasions but I don't think it matters as long as its all frightfully light, and one kisses with laughter. After all it doesn't hurt one and it is giving someone a little pleasure. Pleasure is so difficult to achieve in this world that it seems wrong to deny it to someone for the sake of a few "morals" - whatever they are! There's so much false prudery about and most of it is only cowardice in disguise - running away from facts under the pretence that facts are dangerous and immoral.

Wednesday January 10th -. (1940)

We went off in the morning to see Idamandullah's(?) tomb. It was a little gem of workmanship especially the top story(sic) which is in latticed white - marble. We sat in the grounds for some time and it was very peaceful. After lunch Eileen and I slept and got up at 4.30 to watch the Inglis clan riding. Quite amusing but it always makes me want to laugh as being rather futile and so intense. In the evening went to tea with E.O.'s wife, a fat, sweet Indian woman. Revolting tea. Went down to station and saw Alec looking rather smart. Eileen is quaintly possessive with him now - perhaps they have some private understanding.

Thursday January 11th -. (1940)

Went off to Secundera(?) in the morning. Akbar's tomb - lovely surroundings and the tomb itself is moving for its simplicity - white marble with a black velvet shroud, reached by long dim corridors. There is a beautiful old lamb above it, and the roof is 70 ft. One of the best places is the little Archaeological(sic) bungalow in the grounds - pure white with a thatched roof and scarlet flowers all round. Lovely for a honeymoon. In the evening we met Tony who insisted on us going for a farewell dinner at the Cecil. Others present were Pat Thompson, Yvonne, Peter (?), Blimey O'Reilly and a Countess, half Irish and half Greek, called Doris. This latter had marmalade hair and green eyelashes and was sweetly and stickily affectionate. Tony and I of course were paired, Eileen and Pat, and Yvonne and Peter. Peter was a dear, v. attractive and kept sober. Tony called me darling all the time and kissed me twice. I suppose its alright. Pat was a little tight and also tried to kiss me but without success. Yvonne was terribly prudish and didn't enter into it all and will probably complain to her aunt. She is a funny kid - It w ---

(It seems Iris broke off here. The rest of the word and the rest of the sentence appear to be written at a later date and using a different pen)

--- as all quite fun but stupid and pointless and something I wouldn't care to repeat.

Friday January 12th -. (1940)



Richard's birthday. He left at about 9.30 having got up at 6.15 to see the Taj at sunrise. It was very cold and lovely but a little disappointing. I felt faintly religious which was odd. The drive to Muttra was quite pleasant. When we got there Eileen and I slept on the sofa, and I felt defiant and cross and dirty. After lunch we set off for Delhi and arrived at about 5. It is a lovely clean spacious place, most beautifully planned. The hotel is nice and the centre of shops which are beastly enticing. My hair is the most hectic mess. At dinner we saw the Duguids. Can't think why I'm in this foul temper.

#### Saturday January 13th - (1940)

Went off to see the fort [Red fort in Delhi] in the morning. It is exquisite, much more polished than Agra, and with a quite different appeal - exquisitely kept up. I enjoyed the Museum most, with Nicholson's coat and other Mutiny relics. In the afternoon went to the hairdresser and after a scurry to tea at Davicos(?) with some Indians. Quite enjoyable. In the evening Colonel Patterson came round. He is a genial old bird, a little on the heavy side but nice nevertheless. Went to "Q Planes" in the evening and adored it. Ralph Richardson is a pet and an amazingly good actor. Met Charles Trestrail of Cawnpore who seemed more at ease and v. nice.

#### Sunday January 14th - (1940)

A fearfully hectic day - I got crosser as it went on but it was all necessary and instructive. Col. Patterson took us flying round all over Delhi and E.(?) and I climbed right to the top of the Qutab [Minar] a 235ft building. A perfectly horrible experience. We had lunch in there and met two other females both amiable and one pretty. In the afternoon a sweet girl called Joan Hogan-Brown came round and we chattered for quite a time. V. attractive and intelligent. Bobby is so stupidly mute, and doesn't make any effort except where her boy friends are concerned. Pretty but dumb. More sightseeing, dinner with Pats games and bed at 12

#### Monday January 15th - (1940)

A pleasantly quiet morning. Wandered round the Assembly which is very clean and pretty, then went out to cantonments to see Indian woman. Has 2 adorable children and looked so happy and maternal but I suppose after 8 she won't be so charming. After lunch I wandered down and chose some records at 4 annas each! At 4.30 we went off with Col. Pat. to see Mutiny relics. These, strangely enough fascinate me more than Mogul tombs. Quite wrong and shows an undignified lack of imagination. In the evening I went or rather we went to dinner with the Hogan-Browns. Joan is a dear kid, but tiring as she talks without stopping and mostly about herself. Pretty and lively and infinitely preferable to Bobby. Went to see "Thunder Afloat" afterwards. Joined by three youths from the Duke of Wellingtons. One was sheepish with long flapping hair, another tall and nice-looking ~~with~~ but unbearably blasé, and the third small and amiable but common. A ghastly crew, fearfully spoilt. I could have shoved them into a cold pond - spoilt and very young.

#### Tuesday January 16th - (1940)

We finished a very pleasant tour - not too pleasantly. The journey was quite alright. I slept in a sticky and dusty haze most of the time and we got back at 5.20. But when we

arrived everything was filthy and Mummy's nerves frayed. So it was rather a mess. At dinner we were joined by Coko who is in great form these days and seems to have lost most of his reserve. I was trying to discover where most of his attraction lay but apart from his smile there is nothing definite. Just a sleepy sort of charm that eludes definition.

Wednesday January 17th - (1940)

An utterly miserable day for the most part. Eileen came round in the morning and we arranged to play tennis. At 3.30 she arrived, plus a note from Coko asking her to the dance this evening. I tried to make all sorts of excuses but its obvious he likes her a good deal more than me at any rate. All the time we were playing tennis I was feeling sick and miserable. Why does he like her - she isn't attractive or even intelligent. I felt murderous and consequently wrote feverishly while they went and danced. There seemed something in it but I haven't anything to say.

Thursday January 18th - (1940) (This entry was not written on the following page but 6 pages further on in this particular diary - immediately following Jan. 25th in fact))

It started to pour early in the morning. It was strangely soothing and friendly to wake up to rain beating on the roof. Homesickness is a silly and unnecessary complaint but I get it badly at times and feel suicidal. Went to lunch with Maureen. She was terribly sweet and friendly and we seem to get on awfully well. Pam Rogers was there and is a dear and definitely my type. We had fun playing the gramophone and I felt I mattered and at home.. Oh I'm glad about Maureen - its important she should like me. My feelings for Niall have altered an awful lot within the last month or two. I no longer feel sick at the thought of meeting him. When I'm with him, too, I feel placid and at ease whereas I used to be a ghastly mass of nerves. I wonder why I don't think it's a slacking off of love - merely an advanced stage. Its queer, marriage doesn't seem to come into it much. The physical side is really rather irrelevant when I think of him. Probably because he has never showed any signs of being attracted physically. Angel!

Friday January 19th - (1940)

Had a fortune-teller in the morning who told me the following.

- i. I was going to be married within nine months to someone with money - possibly a Colonel!
- ii. A Lieut. was always thinking about me, but that I only thought of him on and off.
- iii. I would get a letter and a photo in one month and 2 days (Feb. 21st which would make me very happy.
- iv. I would go home in 11 months and live till I was 81 and die working.
- v. My marriage wouldn't be very happy.
- vi. I would be great and have money
- vii. My good luck would start in 23 days (Feb.11th)
- viii. I would have one bad illness and after that no more.
- ix. A small fat bald man would bring me money
- x. A small young man was very fond of me but I not of him (John Harris?)  
That I was very lucky.

Its rather queer - I wonder if anything will come of it. I don't want to marry a Colonel, is Niall the Lieut. and will I really be great. I wish my marriage would be a success. In the afternoon I went out for a ride on Augustus. It was lovely at first - we ambled down lanes and through villages and I felt contented. What did it matter about Coko or anyone else when one had solitude and sunshine and day-dreams, However, when we got on to the polo the horse got bolshie and threw me. It was darn painful at first - I thought my back was broken - visions of life in a wheel chair rushed before me in the ten seconds I was prostrate! Eventually rescued and put to bed and felt fairly alright.

Saturday January 20th -. (1940)

An utterly miserable day. For the most part I'm in one of my black spells at present. I've got no boy-friends, or friends of any kind - at least they don't write to me. I can't enjoy any games, I can't enjoy dancing, Eileen gets on my nerves and the whole worlds wrong. Also I'm feeling very much in love with Niall and he isn't here and won't be for weeks. Its a cursed life. But I'm reading a book called "Precious Bane" which is absolute bliss and one I must get. Funny, its the second I've read about deformity. Both point out that deformity throws you in on yourself and makes you discover hidden riches by introspection. It warps but often in a good direction, making you doubly sensitive to mockery and casual glances and vey proud and touchy and moody and miserable. Is it worth it to be different, even if that difference makes one superior. If only someone could assure me it was worth it - but its so difficult absolutely by myself.

Sunday January 21st -. (1940)

Got up and went to church but felt no spiritual benefit. I just can't get back into that first fine careless rapture - what it is I had that I've lost - except childhood. Afterwards went to see the McCleans - Coko was there and amiable, but seems taken frightfully with Eileen. Wonder why - he never showed signs of it before. Mummy is obviously furious and grumbles away all the time and makes me feel so furious and unhappy. Why can't she leave things alone - its only agravating(sic) to us all. Talked to a Maj. Mallison - nice.

Monday January 22nd -. (1940)

Played Mah-Jong with Mrs Anderson in morning. She is a tall attractive Swedish woman who could be very lovely if she took more trouble with her appearance. Also with Mrs Whiteside who I consider unattractive and uninteresting but harmless. In the afternoon I walked over to Eileen and felt better for it. Mummy is in a furious temper these days and I'm in the depths of a sickening depression. She goes on and on about Eileen and Coko as if they were both horrible and silly, and tormenting herself and me with obvious professional jealousy.

Tuesday January 23rd -. (1940)

Another empty day. Maureen came to see me in the morning. Every time I meet her I find more in common and like her more. Quite apart from Niall I have become awfully fond of her and this is a great relief because I always felt a little guilty in this friendship. Now its alright; went for a ride in the afternoon which v. enjoyable and



Augustus behaved more or less. Eileen spent his last evening with Coko and Mummy made the usual sarcastic and spiteful comments. I must say I can't see her attraction because the poor child has no brains.

Wednesday January 24th - (1940)

Went for a bicycle ride in the morning plus dogs. Afterwards just messed round, writing out poetry etc. Definitely my favourite occupation. A peace descends on me when I'm working that I never get otherwise, and shuts me off from every miserableness and regret. For the time. Went to cocktail dance in the evening - at first it was desperate as Coko only wanted to dance with Eileen and I had nobody. But eventually I picked up young Sapper called Maude(?) who is very nice but not at all thrilling. Coko is obviously in love with Aileen (presumably this should be Eileen?). Said goodbye to him.

Thursday January 25th - (1940)

Spent the usual uninspiring morning, At 12 went off to lunch with Maureen. We chattered until Lilian Smith and Ivy (her companion) arrived. Lilian is an enormous female, old and red-faced and very sweet. Talks a lot and is echoed in a piping chee-chee voice by Ivy. At lunch she burst into a song she had made up for the 52nd - "have you been thinking of me, boys". Maureen and I were almost under the table, tears pouring down my cheeks. I hared home to play tennis with Bubbles Mainstrom(?) and two of the South Lancs - Richard Horne and Freddie Hipwood. These last are peculiar specimens but quite nice. Tennis was enjoyable but I played excrutiatingly. Afterwards changed and went to tea - Ronnie Mitchell and Mrs Anderson were there - latter is a dear but Ronnie always frightens me. Richard asked me to go to a concert with him on Sunday - don't know if it'll come off. Really rather a sense of humour. Went to a flick and dinner with Eileen. Apparently Coko changed completely yesterday and never made any advances but seemed rather off her. Most queer. He is queer, I think and probably has had some frightening experience with a woman.

**Friday January 26th. - (1940)**

Woke up feeling heavy and liverish and in rather nasty temper. Got a letter from Betty Harris about Cawnpore. Poor dear she's suffering from a hopeless passion - so difficult at her age to have one that isn't. I shall be able to find out if Johns feeling for me is the same as for Yvonne - or something deeper. Spent the day sleeping mostly - it rained in the evening and I felt so happy and comfortable. I adore the rain. It fills me with a strange yearning - for what - - !

Saturday January 27th - (1940)

Rain all over today - lovely and fresh. Still feeling liverish. Maureen came in the morning to have her fortune told. The man was a rotter and humbug and so I felt rather guilty her having to spend. Shes(sic) really quite an intimate friend now, and as this intimacy has taken so long to reach its worth so much more. In the afternoon Eileen and I played golf and I went round in the brilliant score of 85! However, quite enjoyable. In the evening had small party - Bruce (!) Maude, Capt. Severin and Eileen.

Saw "Sweethearts" which was fun and then went on and danced. Bruce is a dear and likes me but no more. Severin nice too.

#### January 28th - Sunday (1940)

Maureen came in the morning - bursting with news. Ronnie is apparently adoring, thinks hes (she's?) the only girl in the world and in fact wants to marry her. At least that is what I gather - she although she likes him doesn't feel anything more. It was a great shock - it just shows how men like the quiet, simple sort of girl for wives - even if they themselves are the reverse. She would make a lovely wife. but is love being in love - thats whats(sic) so complicated. She'll have to solve it for herself but poor Ronnie - he's so young and so desperately enthusiastic and serious - it'll make him very unhappy. To someone as gay and flippant as he is, serious news hurts so much more - if (? it's?) unrewarded. Apparently he writes poetry and thinks beautiful thoughts - a hidden gold mine in fact! Most queer - - - .

In the afternoon I rode and met Bruce Maude. He is awfully nice but queer in a way - anyway I like him. He said he was going to send me a chit and have a party - will he? Augustus behaved rottenly and I had to get off eventually - it is a nuisance. He's rather a hopeless animal really - I think I'll give him back.

In the evening I dined with Richard and Freddie - it was a bit tense and difficult, but Richard nobly told long if somewhat pointless stories and so there were no awkward pauses. Freddie annoys me though, he just sits and giggles and is fearfully forward and all over one. Went on to the concert - it was very entertaining. Saw Bruce Maude there and he ignored me. Went on to eggs and bacon at the Mess - quite fun. Eileen annoys me intensely she's so pointless and lily-like. I could slap her. Ronnie looking sheepish - poor love. Richard I definitely like, but Freddie I don't - his type annoys me.

#### Monday 29th (January 1940)

Played Mah Jong with usual crowd. I won as usual. Afterwards tore off to lunch with Maureen. We talked all through lunch about Ronnie and after she showed me some letters he had written to her - I wanted to bury my face in a cushion and cry, they were so lovely. He writes poetry for her - beautiful though not good, and tells her the loveliest thoughts about herself, and theres(sic) something at the same time, humble and protective. Oh if only someone felt like that about me - he's so darling underneath, and reads and writes and is exactly in mind is what I like. Though of course otherwise not. Maureen talked to me about all sorts of things and we really are soul mates. We walked over here and had tea and afterwards messed around until 6.30, when Ronnie and Skipper came. Discussed a cabaret we hope to have here. Of course these things fill me with horror and dread but I won't be asked in any case. Oh I'm glad Nialls(sic) coming back soon, but of course it'll mean Maureen won't be so free for me. It is fun having her, I should go mad if I had to have Eileen all the time. She is looking so pretty - "L'amour s'embellit(?)" (Love suits her?) etc. Oh help I'm jealous, not of him but of love.

#### Tuesday 30th (January 1940)

Folly had seven puppies in the night. - Eileen and I went for a smelly walk in the morning and I felt peevish. In the evening we went for a drink party at Nobby Clarkes. It was quite enjoyable - the usual rather pointless chatter and imbecilic witticisms.

Mummy came away in a ferocious temper as she hadn't been the centre of everything. Makes me furious but impotent. I got home so late I couldn't eat any dinner - buzzed straight off to fetch Maureen. Ronnie came too, most awkward, I felt dreadful and tried to be tactful but didn't succeed. He's pathetically, ferociously serious - !

Wednesday 31st (January 1940)

He returns today. Joy oh bliss. I wonder how I can ever live the time when he's away. Oh blast my writing . Why won't it go forwards for a change. I'm absolutely fed up. In the morning I got a note from Maureen asking me to play Croquet(sic) and go to tea. However I refused latter as I was paying golf with Eileen. It was quite amusing. I played rather well on the whole and did the water hole in bogey. Met Niall and Dorothy Baird on the course and they both shouted rude remarks to me about my reputation in Agra. I hope Niall doesn't really hear anything - I should hate him to know.

Eileen came back to tea and afterwards Maureen and Niall came round. E. annoys me intensely. She comes up with that silly assurance of hers and just throws her weight about in endless pointlessness. I know she's got her eye on Niall - oh no! He was sweet, but he hopes to be in France in --(4?) months and I shall die of misery. Its too ghastly - he doesn't care.

Went to Cocktail Dance on Bruce's party. Quite fun. Northgate was there and rather nice. Bruce is an angel and I feel I know him - !.

Thursday Feb.1st (1940)

Played golf at 9a.m. with Maureen. She played superlatively and I atrociously. We chattered amiably and afterwards she came back and spent the morning on the verandah, knitting and chatting. The Ronnie affair is progressing rather spasmodically and one-sidedly. She encourages him too much and yet - well it gives him pleasure. Muddle - . Played tennis in afternoon with Bill Berridge, Lander and Maureen Anderson. It was quite fun and I played better. I have a feeling Lander is taken with Maureen, but I don't see how it can be true. They all seem to have tied each other into knots - highly involved and awkward. Bill has changed so. An awful pity.

Feb.2nd Friday (1940)

The rain started in the night. It was lovely - gorgeous. I lay in bed with a wet wind blowing in my face and the rain on the roofs and a full feeling of utter contentment. However this was spoilt by having to leap out of bed and cart baths about. It rained solidly all day. I got a note from Niall and a poem, a perfectly lovely one. Oh if only I knew he was being serious but its just pose and flippancy, He and Maureen came along after tea but it was rather unsatisfactory. She talked to Ronnie, and he picked up a friend - oh angel.

(Next page - undated)

A B C B C A D E D F G H I J k L M N O P Q R.S.T.U.V.W.X.Y.Z.

Niall



Without a thought

~~For dreams~~

And gone

Des/ol/ate/ and/ di/si/ll/us/ion/ed

Disillusioned and desolate

With only

A dream.                      Striving

(If fate                      Endlessly

Is kind                      To discover

to a lonely)              the secret

Of what?

A. Out of the days living?

B. That have passed. Or not

C. Have you learnt Caring

At last                      In an

eternal wave

of despairing

And rising again

Striving endlessly

To discover

The secret

of living

What

Out of this chaos

Has got

Point.

Now there is nothing to

do but wait

But after

There'll be laughter

And jokes

Singing

And pain

(Springing)

And there'll be a point

A hope

And dreams

Perhaps

If you've not done with dreams

And scope -

) What for - ?

Ah so many have

asked

Before

What for?

What are the stars

(Venus and Mars -

And perhaps you'll be  
     satisfied  
 Or perhaps  
 Dreams will have died  
 Somewhere out in  
     the cold'  
 Funny to think  
     But it  
 Standing on the brink  
     of things  
 That you'll be old  
     and springs  
 Specially Paris ones  
     Won't stir  
 Whatever they do  
     Who  
         knows?  
~~I know that at~~  
~~some time~~  
~~In this stirring prose~~  
~~(Poetry but it had~~  
~~to rhyme)~~  
~~I must mention life~~  
~~with a capital L~~  
~~Which all shows~~  
~~That~~  
~~Dramatic~~  
~~Significant~~  
 Dramatic and significant  
     Pause.  
 That 'pause' ought to rhyme  
     With 'knows'  
 But it quite obviously doesn't  
     Bother,

Restless and dissatisfied  
     You stand  
     Seeking  
 To understand  
     What men have died  
     To find -  
 And dying  
     Left mankind  
 No evidence of their  
     Trying.

    - A Purpose, a reason  
 and above all a goal,  
 Why your  
     (Presumably)

Immortal soul  
     is here  
     at all -  
 Why home is dear  
     And why this land  
     ~~So—ish~~ so dear  
 Wanting, striving  
     Living  
 For something you  
     haven't got.  
 But what?  
 And why you sleep  
     And wake, and                      Do not keep  
     Faith with your dreams  
     Forsaking  
What you were taught  
 Them and forgetting living  
     In your endless striving  
 For something you haven 't  
     Got  
     But what ?

---

These have I loved - the dusty  
     scent of evening  
 When smoke and pipes and -- is are  
     purple mists are ~~ending~~  
     settling over all.  
 And somewhere throbs a drum  
     an urgent call  
 To darkness and to magic.

(Next page - undated)

A.B.C.D.E.F.H.I.J.k.L.M.N.O.P.Q.R.S.T.U.V.W.Y.

These have I loved - the haunted  
     air of twilight  
~~With woodsmoke cutting into purple mists~~  
 With wood-smoke heady and  
     insistent blown  
 Into a purple mist. A shadow  
     thrown  
~~Gaunt~~  
 Across an arid sun-split plain -  
     one tree  
 Stark and alone, and gaunt, but  
     infinitely





Why me.

Its funny that ~~this love~~  
~~of his~~  
Should leave me  
the love which  
holds

Chains Him leaves me free  
All I can do is sit and  
ask  
With sweet simplicity  
Why me?

---

February 3rd Saturday (1940)

Another wet day in the morning. Mummy and I went all over the place in a car. Met McLean who asked me to go there so I presume I'll have to - gosh! This is all wrong. I spent last night with the McLeans. He was in a dreadful mood and dinner was a nightmare. In the morning I played golf with Maureen and we came back here and talked. Had lunch with McLeans and Alec came to tea. He is a queer cove - wonder what his feelings for Eileen are! Went to flicks with him and Denis Dunlop in evening. Felt peevish and in rotten form.

February 4th Sunday (1940)

Got away from McLeans to find that the parents had ~~asked~~ gone to Naini for the day. Hastily asked Maureen to lunch. Drank in the Club in the morning but was definitely bored. Lunch was quite fun and afterwards we sat and knitted. Niall blew in with another poem he'd(sic) concocted. Terribly sweet - all about India. He's really got a gift in that direction tho' some of his stuff's beautifully bad. Darling - In the evening went to church and enjoyed myself a lot - quiet and serene. Had pyjama party with parents who've not absolutely decided on a bungalow.

February 5th Monday (1940)

Mondays always a lovely day and this was no exception - funny its connected always with him. In the morning wrote some poetry for the Baird menage. I don't know if it'll be well received but doubt it. Eileen came along and seemed a bit depressed - she has got something in her I suppose. Got a note from Bubbles and played golf with her in the afternoon. It was fun - she being as bad as I am. Felt well exercised and content. After dinner went to a concert with Maureen, Niall and Ronnie. It was rather a priceless show - terribly vulgar but somehow that didn't matter. It didn't to me at any rate. I wanted it to go on forever - just sitting there and being happy. Ronnie I imagine felt the same but kept admirably controlled. Afterwards there was a dance. Niall and I retired to the fire for the most part and talked sleepily and a little disconnectedly. It was heavenly only they went rather early. There's a new freedom between us now - can't think where it sprung from but we definitely feel easier together now and words are only "the tappings" of content". Very lovely feeling. Maureen is looking sweet these

days - radiant with the satisfaction of being loved. And I've reached the heights for the present.

#### February 6th Tuesday (1940)

I can't understand how two days in succession could be lovely but they were. On this one it poured with rain most of the morning, but after lunch was beautiful and we went off to play golf with the Bairs. Mummy and him went off first but and we hacked along in the rear. I played excruciatingly but loved every moment. It was a beautiful day, windy and warm, and Niall was adorable. Afterwards we went along to tea and played Croquet. Then Niall showed me photos and I felt that he was liking me and not being so absent-minded.

#### February 7th Wednesday (1940)

A third lovely day. This can't last. In the afternoon Maureen and Eileen played tennis with the Nicholsons and came back to tea. In the evening we had a Cocktail Dance Party. The usual crowd, but only one mattered to me. Desmond in great form and Ronnie devoted. Alan I think is suffering from an infatuation for Mrs Anderson, and the atmosphere was a little tense between them. Most awkward. Niall was adorable and we got closer than ever before I think. He asked me to go to the flicks on Saturday - oh I'm so happy and it can't last.

#### February 8th Thursday (1940)

It couldn't last and it hasn't. I was looking forward to this so much but it was awful. In the morning took the dogs out and then drank in the Club with Nicholsons. After lunch it started to rain and looked bleak, but we played tennis and I played with Niall and we were quite beaten and he noticed my leg -. I know it. Oh God, its cruel, but he had to know some day. At tea he didn't speak to me once. In the evening had a sticky dinner party and went on to see "St. Martin's Lane" - v. good. I loathed the whole evening.

#### February 9th Friday (1940)

Spent the morning with Eileen and was consequently mildly but pleasantly bored. After lunch it looked thunderous but eventually Bubbles braved it to play golf. However it was impossible and after a short walk we came back here to tea. She told me rather peculiar things about Ronnie which upset me for Maureen's sake. I hope he isn't flippant and a complete rotter - he was apparently keen on Bubbles too. I can't tell M. though I suppose I ought to. Went to drinks with Bruce - the others except Eileen turned up. He is nice but strange.

#### February 10th Saturday (1940)

Woke up feeling intensely happy. Maureen, Eileen and I did the flowers in the morning and in the afternoon played golf with B.( or E.?). At 6 I trundled along to the cinema, and Ronnie, the Bairs and I went in together. The film - "The Spy in Black" was lovely and of course perfect rapture under the conditions. Went back and had supper with Bairs in front of the fire. Afterwards played the gramophone and talked

and felt intensely happy. Going to bed in that house was pure bliss "Tenderly the day that I have loved - - "

February 11th Sunday (1940)

My luck begins - quite true(?). Woke up gloriously aware of being happy. In the morning trundled down to the Club on Maureen's carrier. We returned for lunch and Gen. McRea came. He was most jovial. Afterwards N. and I lay out in the garden talking, went for a sunny stroll by the river, and returned to a homely verandah tea from whence we collapsed onto chairs again. All this filled by pleasant and easy, if not intimate conversation. Maureen is a dear but so hard to get at. Went to church in the evening and enjoyed it a lot. On returning from church both of them were in peculiar moods, flying for each other and otherwise being obstinately silent. And yet they were neither of them really in a bad temper. Very awkward. However Ronnie and Alan appeared and the tension was relieved by returning to the kitchen and cooking eggs. Evening ended hilariously in cushion-throwing. Niall seemed terribly sweet but - oh gosh I don't know. Hes like her(? this?), far and near at the same time. He's so difficult with other people of his own age, and though I like that difference - yet - -

February 12th - Monday (1940)

One more day before we go back to normal - god, what'll I do when he's gone and theres no hope from one days end to another - no chance of meeting him round a corner or getting one of those adorable red-crested envelopes. I get waves of adoration, and one is going strong at the moment. Went to Mah Jong in the morning. After went off to the cinema and sat on a sofa with him. He never attempts to hold my hand, but sometimes I'm almost suffocated because his knee touches mine and rests for half a glorious moment. Went on to drinks at the Landers and met Brian, in great form.

February 13th Tuesday (1940)

Dick came round in the morning in great form - he seems to have taken a sudden fancy to -(?) me, I don't know why. Told me a lot about his past, present and future. Spent a lazy afternoon, took the dogs out on a bicycle. Maureen came into the club but didn't see him all day which depressed me to the extreme. Frightful to be dependent for ones happiness on one person but I wouldn't be without love's penalties and pangs for anything. Desmond came round in the evening and we chattered - why can't I want him who is willing.

February 14th Wednesday (1940)

Got an air-mail from Betty in the morning. She has changed a lot she says - grown up and switched up her ideas. Basil is still so beautiful ideal and they love each other, but she says shes not brave enough to give up her life and country and become an exile to marry him. I think shes got to be careful not to dramatise her feelings, war atmosphere and so on. But perhaps she really is in a muddle and intensely serious. Someone is passionately in love with her and she has lots of boy friends. Funny I can't inspire love like that.

In the afternoon played golf with Eileen, Desmond and Bruce. Quite enjoyable. they came back to tea. Desmond is looking white and miserable these days and dying to go



home. Poor lamb - he has almost permanent fever. in the evening went to Cocktail Dance with Measures v. enjoyable. Danced chiefly with Gerald and Dick - latter is so sweet and I feel I know him much better now. Desmond was in a peculiar mood - we went on to the flicks - "The Drum" which was quite amusing only desperately cut. Dick sat next to Eileen and though I like Desmond I do think Dick is more attractive. I'm never satisfied with what I've got - except in one case and I never get the chance.

#### Thursday 15th (February 1940)

Spent the morning writing to Betty. Felt vaguely miserable - don't know why, except I haven't seen him for days now. After lunch played golf with Lander, Bill Berridge and Maureen Anderson. Lander is definitely in love with latter or something equivalent:- can't understand it. Had tea in the Club and talked to Ronnie for a bit. There's something about him I don't like and I don't want M. to marry him. In the evening Brian came round and stayed for such hours that we asked him to supper. Was very talkative and amusing - golly hes(sic) attractive, due chiefly to his age.

#### Friday February 16th (1940)

A vague morning with Eileen. Saw Maureen for a bit and Niall was supposed to be coming but of course never turned up. In the afternoon Eileen and I went out on our bikes to watch polo, which never started. We climbed up a tree for a bit and it brought back lovely memories of youth. Played golf with Guineau, Lander and Maureen A. Deadly boring and I played excruciatingly and felt murderous. God they are a fatuous crowd. Heard the Nicholsons are coming out and what can I do with them.

#### Saturday February 17th (1940)

A day of miserable failures and bad organisation. Got Desmond and friend to play tennis but N's didn't turn up till 4.15 and left after tea. Desmond, Wa-y(Wally? Warry?), Mummy and I went on to see "Young Man's Fancy" which was rather nice. Desmond seems to be changing in some way and becoming a little intense - or perhaps its just imagination. Queer lad - I can't make him out. Went to lunch with Maureen which was enjoyable. I'm glad I'm going to Cawnpore later. I'll be at Ronnie's party and he'll be there, oh the angels will sing.

#### Sunday February 18th (1940)

Went out to Budahn(?) for the day. Desmond, Dennis Warry(?) Eileen and I arrived in time for lunch which was a hilarious meal. Afterwards we chugged off for tennis and were surprised to see Dick and Frank Mason bursting through the undergrowth, beer-bottles in hand - car - collapse, The others played tennis while we watched and the gramophone pounded away. God my writing gives me fits. The atmosphere at the Nicholson place is amazing - one is kept at a hysterical pitch all the time. Desmond seemed to be watching me an awful lot - I wonder. Its so hopeless if he starts getting serious. Dick is off Noreen absolutely and on to Eileen it appears. He is very vague and seems to get fits of attachment to various people. There is something intensely lovable about him apart from attraction - I think its a vaguely protective instinct he inspires. We left after dinner and had quite an eventful journey back owing to

punctures and \*Warry(Worry?) falling into a bog. Desmond behaved a little queerly as usual but I shan't be sure unless he tells me - I'm dreading it in a way I can't cope with scenes.

\* "Warry"s name is later changed permanently to "Worry"

Monday February 19th (1940)

Maureen came round in the morning and we had our usual gossip about nothing. What is it about her that keeps one at a distance even in ones most intimate moments. Some days we can't find anything to say to one another and yet I like her terribly and there's so much to talk about. Got a sweet letter from Jill - she is an amazing kid - very old - very young - and a mass of character. Funny in our friendship Shes(sic) always been boss. She'll break a lot of hearts before shes(sic) finished. Had my hair done in the evening.

Tuesday Feb. 20th (1940)

Played golf with Maureen at 9.30. Discussed the usual Ronnie question in small circles as usual - and afterwards went to Flagstaff House to pick up magazine. Niall gave me two handkerchiefs - v. touching! Desmond wrote asking to play tennis - signed "ever yours" does that mean anything I'm so young and how does one find out these things - instinct isn't enough. In the afternoon Eileen and I played golf and she came back to tea. Felt happy and excited. After an early dinner went off to fetch Niall and Maureen and Ronnie. Saw "The Underpup(?)" which I enjoyed but the others didn't. He's an angel but -

Wednesday Feb. 21st (1940)

A dreaded day in a way. Went to lunch with Bairds - its always a bit embarrassing, they quarrel most of the time. Maureen sometimes is a little fractious. Looking at them I occasionally see myself in her place - nagging and being annoyed by his mannerisms. Probably stayed with them till 4 and went home to tea. Went to Ronnie's party in the evening - it was more fun than I expected. I got on very well with Teddy M. Edwards who is engaged to a girl at home - he is a pet with loads of character.. Ronnie was very love-sick and knows that I know. He doesn't frighten me any more - I think love weakens a person, makes them helpless and humble - and yet tremendously strong and obstinate. If Maureen, who is so gentle and silent appeals to him - well the rest follows. Niall is a complex question - last night he didn't really attract me at all or I, I think, him. But sometimes were(sic) electrically near to each other. What's worrying me is - will he write when he goes away. If he once started I know I could make him go on. He's almost better on paper and I know I am. I'm sometimes so sublimely sure of my love for him and at others I feel that isn't strong enough and he isn't the "dear acquaintance" I'm looking for.

CAWNPORE

Thursday Feb. 22nd (1940)

Got up at 6 and caught 7.30 train. First part of the journey was uneventful but at Lucknow an amiable youth from South Wales B's got in and cheered up the rest of the

journey with lively and intermittent small talk. Knows Billy and Rollo Price. Got to Cawnpore over an hour late and was met by John. He really is completely unattractive more so than practically anybody I've met. And yet his mind is burning and vital and very lovable. The rest of the day was utterly miserable. Yvonne annoys me so much I could scream but only retire completely into my shell. She shouted and roared at the two young men here and showed off like a schoolgirl on a half-holiday. I said practically nothing and felt miserably self-conscious. Oh why did I come - just think what I could be doing - with him. Oh God, why did you let me come. I shall be a wallflower and a flop and there's no need for it. I'm dreading that party more than I can say. But on Sunday this dreadful time will be over and I shall be back among my own people again. I haven't felt so utterly miserable or "out of it" for years - each second is an hour and each hour an eternity.

(Undated)

Maureen

O, you plant the pain in my heart  
with your wistful eyes  
Girl of my choice, Maureen!  
Will you drive me mad for the  
kisses your shy sweet mouth  
denies  
Maureen?

Like a walking ghost I am, and  
no words to woo  
White rose of the West Maureen  
For its pale you are, and the fear  
Thats on you is over me too  
Maureen!

Sure its one complaint that's on us  
Ashore(?Ashore?) this day  
Bride of my dreams, Maureen.

The smart of the bee that stung us  
His honey must cure, they say  
Maureen

I'll coax the light to your eyes and  
the rose to your face  
Mavoureen, my own Maureen!  
When I feel the warmth of your  
breast, and your nest is my arms embrace  
Maureen!

Oh where was the King of the  
world that day - only me?  
My own true love, Maureen

And you the Queen with me  
there, and your throne in my  
heart, Machree,  
Maureen!

(Following page - undated)

Not unto me O Lord  
Not unto me the rapture of the day  
the peace of night or loves divine surprise  
High heart, high speech, high deeds  
mid honouring eyes  
For at thy word  
All these are taken away.

Not unto [us c.o.] me O Lord  
To [us c.o.] me thou givest the scorn the  
scourge, the scar  
The ache of life, the loneliness  
of death  
The insufferable sufficiency of breath  
And with thy sword  
Thou piercest very far

Friday Feb. 23rd (1940)

Another dreary and miserable day. I'm in such a state that I hate going into a room and mope about doing unnecessary things in privacy. I haven't felt like this for ages and I don't know what brought it on. In the morning we did a sort of Ouijah fortune-telling which informed me I was going to marry a certain David Caine(?) meeting him out here. Don't know if these things have any basic probability but "there are more things -". Went for a walk in the evening and Victor arrived - I don't like him and never will.

Saturday Feb. 24th (1940)

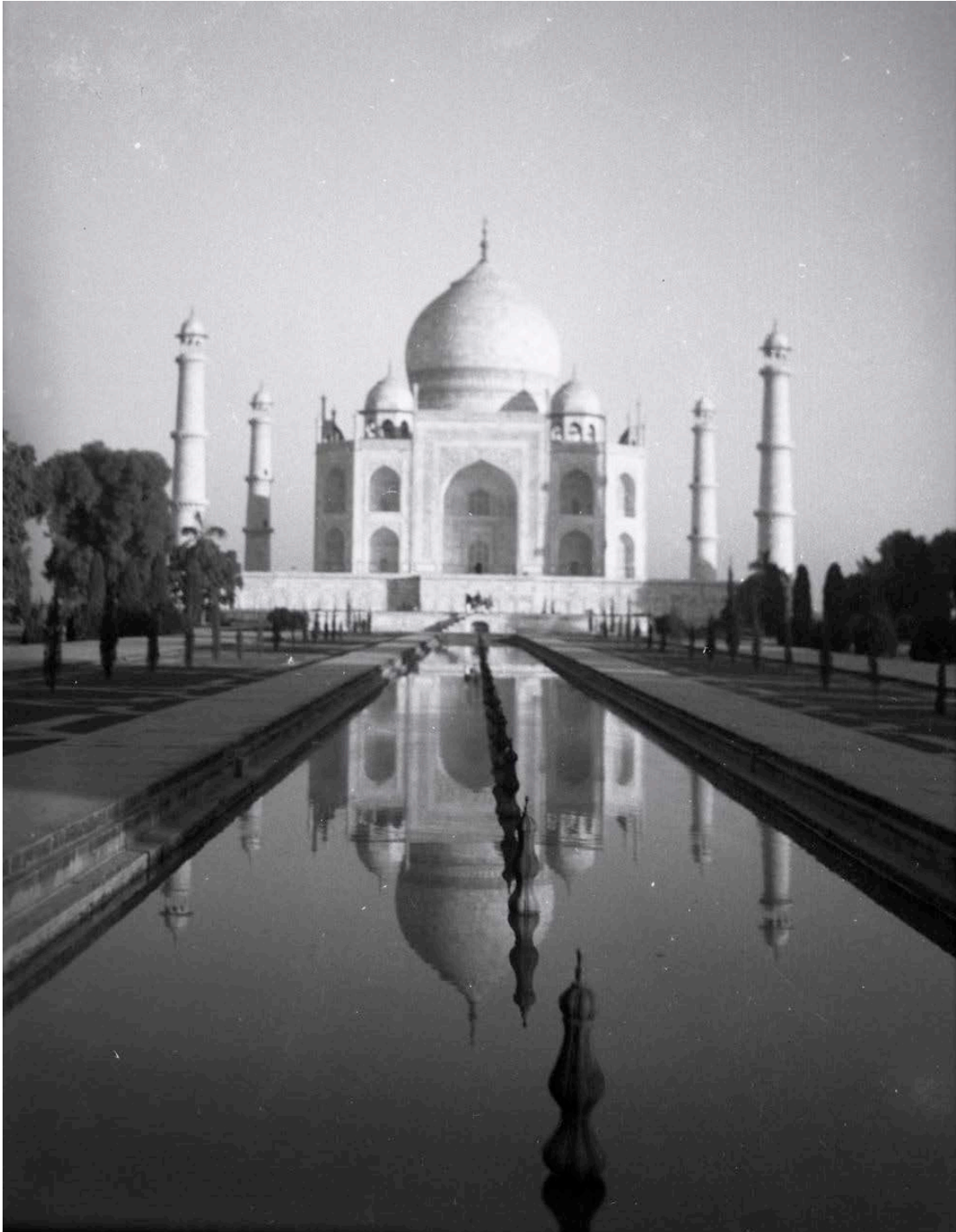
The day I've been dreading all along - as it turned out it wasn't as bad as I'd feared. But pretty good torture all things considered. Spent the morning arranging furniture etc and afternoon sleeping. After tea Betty showed me a few of her faintly amorous letters. There is something very platonic in her love affairs although they seem quite real. She inspires a protective passion and not a possessive one I suppose. Had our baths early and Margaret Sloane arrived first - she is one of the plainest things I've seen for a long time and yet apparently irresistible to the opposite sex. An intelligent girl, very pleasant to talk to but just a shade too sure of herself and conceited. However I enjoyed her conversations enormously because she has a mind that works along the same grooves, and I felt almost for the first time since I left home that there was no need to struggle to get at a person - it all came out naturally and understandably. Dinner was fun. I sat next to John and Freddie Stockwell - latter is a repulsive specimen engaged to Veronica Rice. Veronica is [a c.o.] pretty and sweet but not very clever and I know she'll be miserably unhappy if she ever gets as far as marrying him. She said Tony Brett sent his



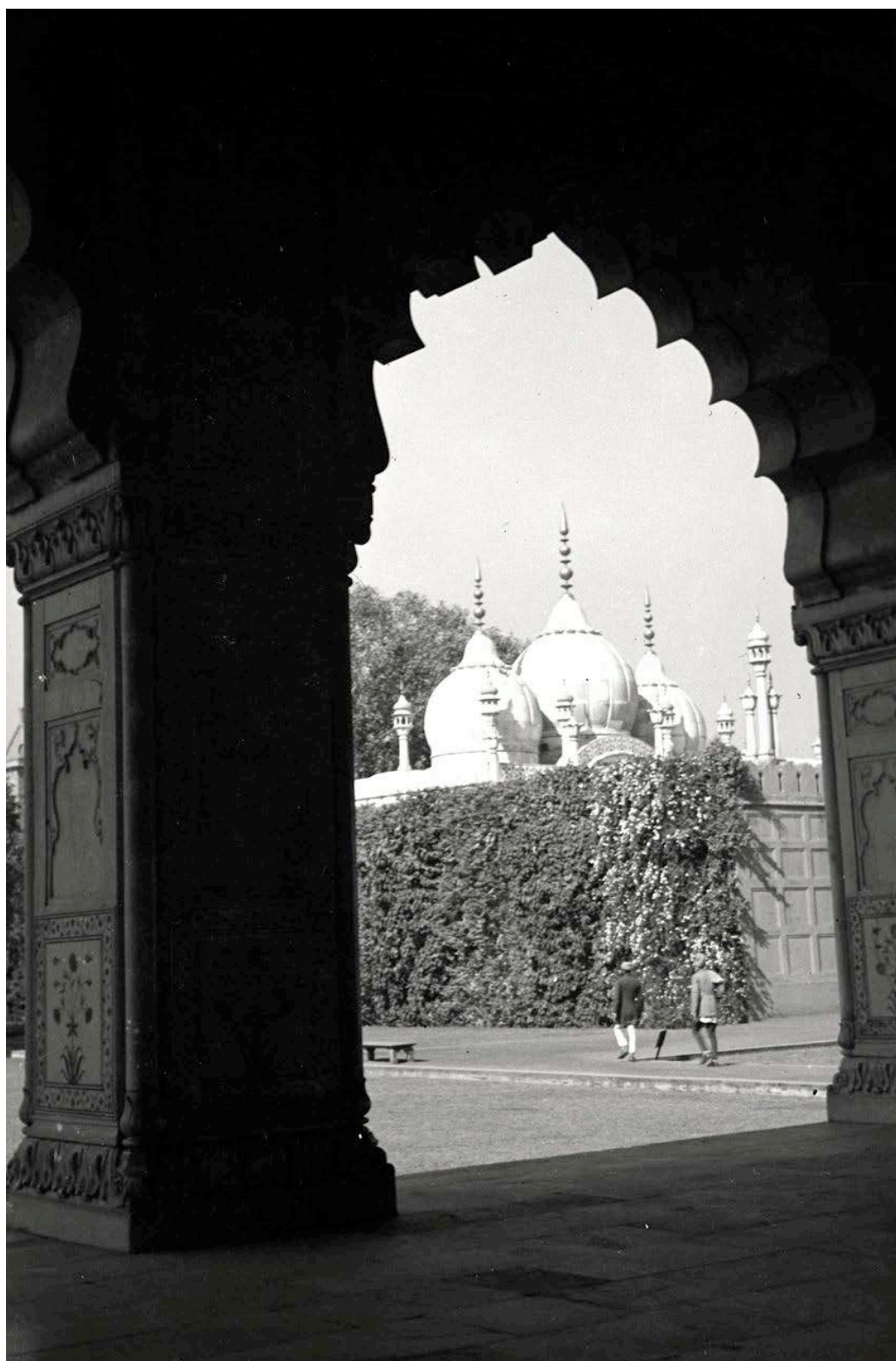
love which pleased me ridiculously. Funny how that affair won't die a natural death. Half way through the dance I got panicky and nearly burst into tears, but I was rescued from complete ruin by a young I.C.S. man who seemed to take a fancy to me. Quite pleasant but not my type. On the whole I can't say I enjoyed it much although it had its moments. John was a dismal failure from the beginning. What I thought I'd found in him just wasn't there.

PHOTO GALLERY: AGRA, TAJ AND FATEPUR SIKRI

TAJ



## FATEPUR SIKRI











## OTHER







?Delhi - Lutyens building

## 5 NAINI (Royal Hotel) - February 25 - April 10 1940

Sunday Feb. 25th (1940)

Never have I been so glad to get away from a place as I did this morning. All the same I don't regret any of it a bit. The first part of the journey was grand fun as Hugh Fowler and Rollo Price were in the carriage and both were sweet, particularly Hugh. He is rather devastating to look at with v. blue eyes and brown slim, and is terribly enthusiastic and companionable. I rather fell - mildly. Slept second part of the journey and arrived 6pm. Niall and Maureen came in and went to a flick after dinner with Desmond Eileen and Worry. Back to the old lovely life in one.

Monday Feb. 26th (1940)

Played Mah Jong with Mrs Anderson and Lander. Quite fun - Picked up Maureen and took her back to lunch. Got a chit from Alec asking me to join them for the flicks. After a lot of persuasion I agreed to go. Wonder why he wants us to go - he must have taken Eileen before, after dinner. Maureen has quite decided that Ronnie is not the person in her life who is going to matter. Poor Ronnie, but I know that shes right. The flick was "Marie Walewska" and very lovely though I've seen it before. Desmond got rather intense and clutched my hand feverishly. He's so very young - no technique. But thats what I like.

Tuesday Feb. 27th (1940)

An absolutely blank day - one seems to get out of things so quickly. I don't really mind but sometimes - oh I don't know. What does it matter anyhow. Its more interesting being plain because you've just got to simply fight for your popularity, and out of nine complete failures theres usually one success thats worth the struggle. Everythings tinged with unreality at present - I feel I'm living in a dream and something is going to jolt me pretty soon into a different life. Just dramatic license -? Alan and Eileen came in.

Wednesday Feb. 28th (1940)

It is steamily hot now - wonder what it'll be like later. Went to see the McLeans - it was all rather chaotic - she got sheets of chits. I don't know what it is about her that attracts people - extreme simplicity and seeming unspoilt ingenuity. Played golf with her , Desmond and Alec - quite amusing though I was excruciating. Felt sunny and on top of the world - spells bad for future. Had tea in the Club and dinneer in our tents. plus Bill Bowden. He is a fairly attractive and quite nice individual - not much one way or the other. Got into my pink and gold frock that I haven't worn before - nice but a little indecent.

Went over to the club at about 9.45. Rest of the party consisted of Hughes (cousins), Greenways, Desmond, Alec, Eileen, Alan and Peter. At first it was back to front but soon changed this. Niall was absolutely sweet all evening. We had long discussions about love and marriage. Funny how one always wants to discuss sex with the object of ones affection. He was infinitely more considerate and kept asking if I was happy out here etc. He's so absolutely unsensual and yet underneath he must be



human and feel all the natural stirrings. I don't know how my feelings towards him stand.

I have a feeling I'm like Scarlett and Ashley, clinging to something that was only a figment of my imagination. In the first place I can't really be in love with him when the long affair can stir me so. He asked me to write to him - so I shall take the chance with both hands. Try to put into print what I've never been able to say in words. Alan seems keen on Eileen and Brian on Cynthia. The evening ended drearily - I felt sleepy and miserable. Desmond, I've come to the conclusion, doesn't mean anything I didn't want him to and yet - oh God what a complex and obstinate machine is the human heart. Elastic, and thank the Lord - tough.

Thursday Feb. 29th (1940)

Feeling rather depressed owing to having nothing to do. Eileen is always being asked to play tennis and I never am. I don't know whether its my tennis or myself - both I suppose. I do so hate the game and yet I could love it. Such fun this life isn't it - oh Golly. We went out for a walk en famille - it was a stormy, yellow day of swirling leaves and made me desperately homesick. In the evening Desmond and Denis came in and stayed to dinner and afterwards we played rummy, rather badly. Can't understand either of them - Desmond particularly. Don't believe he really knows himself.

Friday March 1st (1940)

The day was brought in with a flourish of trumpets by getting a long chit from Niall. He asked me to write to him if I ever felt depressed because he faintly understood me and wouldn't be cynical or bored because he liked me too much. What does that mean - I don't understand him or any men tho' I think I'm so frightfully clever and see through everyone. I thought I was gaining confidence but it seems to be evaporating rapidly. Went to see Eileen in the morning and she firmly denied all rumours and was exceedingly cross, (re her suspected engagement) Went to see "Rains Came" with Eric Raynor and Desmond. V. good.

Saturday March 2nd (1940)

Played golf with Maureen at 9. We collapsed after a few holes and talked desultorily lying on our tummies. Came back to the Club and found Niall there - is a bit sheepish. A note from him arrived later which was definitely sweet(?) and poetic as usual - he has a knack in that direction altho' its definitely stilted. I've got to admit it now - I've got to be honest with myself. I'm not in love with Niall now. God knows when it ended, that 1st fine careless rapture - but its gone. Its left something dear and comforting behind - but love, the physical yearning for somebody - is no more. In the afternoon Maureen and I walked round with Ronnie and Niall and afterwards went round and played the gramophone there. Ronnie now annoys me and treats me as slightly necessary dirt but dirt just the same. He's even condescending where Maureen is concerned. And frightfully dramatic. Arranged the picnic for tomorrow. Its really rather funny to think how in Naini I used to feel lovely inside if I saw \*him at a distance once a month and now I'm blasé about seeing him every day and getting chits every other. It'll be funny if hes falling now - I shall laugh myself sick if that happens. To stop myself from crying. How God, or Fate must enjoy playing these tantalizing tricks on us.

Comment from P.T. \* presumably Iris is now referring to Niall?

It seems that her passion for Niall was not reciprocated. Was he perhaps merely fond of her but found her too young - or was he perhaps not physically interested in women at all? Maybe he just didn't want to commit to a marriage at that point in his life.

Sunday March 3rd (1940)

Felt my cold increasing and was streaming by half way through the morning. Desmond came in and took photos and chatted for some time. Funny how terribly at ease I felt with him and how one(sic) sense of humour works alongside the same lines. Don't believe he's the slightest in love with me - wonder if he'll write. Called for Maureen and we trundled off to Isabunger(???). Met Niall and Ronnie and had substantial picnic lunch. Afterwards we slept - it was rather bliss - the physical isn't absolutely dead for me - at least I felt joyous lying there with his arm touching mine. I was feeling perfectly frightful all day but enjoyed it as much as possible in the circumstances. Ronnie was -ugra(?) until he won the golf competition - I think I like him less and less on acquaintance. He's a dual personality - the outer side is maudlin (nice word that - wonder what it means) but the inner faintly sincere and anyhow pleasant. Niall is so much nicer on paper - he's so fiendishly interested in golf - and manly things like the Army - nice in a way but my jealous female instincts don't care for it. Anyhow feeling like this saves me from the ghastly wrench that would have been -

Monday March 4th (1940)

A blank - in bed feeling like nothing on earth. Maureen and Niall came in the morning and we - arranged various things - The rest of the day I felt frightful and miserable.

Tuesday March 5th (1940)

Margo came in the morning (I completely recovered) and we talked about her engagement. A most upsetting business - she really is an angel and I can talk to her about anything and feel she respects me and doesn't think of me as an infant. Wrote a poem for Niall and a letter - hope he'll appreciate same. He writes practically every day now - purely platonic.

Wednesday March 6th (1940)

~~Maureen looked in~~ Played Mah Jong in morning with Mrs Anderson and Lander. Got a chit from Niall in the middle which was the longest and loveliest I've yet had. All about his ideas about religion etc - coloured by Flauberts "Confession of St. Anthony" or whatever it is. Hes so keenly intelligent and his intellect is so completely different to mine - very cut and dried and masculine and mathematical. I respect it so much because my own reasoning is typically feminine and instinctive and emotional. I wish I had a precise, clear brain that wasn't muddled by moods and the effect of other peoples personality. I haven't one thought that is really mine.

Played golf in the afternoon with Ronnie and Bairds. Niall and I were badly beaten because of my excruciating play. I get awfully cross - I wonder if he minds - it probably revolts him. But its me and I don't intend to pretend to him - if I do to everyone else. Discussed religion violently between every stroke - he has the idea that religion is

entirely selfish and that each person has got to fix up for himself. I agree in a way yet - no its not all selfish. Only in loving someone else to the exclusion of self do we find God. Went to Cocktail Dance and disliked it all very much - had two dances with Bowden who is amiable but uninspiring.

#### Thursday March 7th (1940)

One of those days where little things put one out all the time. In the morning took Margo round the place and landed up at the Club - met Bruce and talked to him for some time. He's a queer cove but different from the set type so I like talking to him. Definitely a lady's man - went and listened to some of his records in the evening which I enjoyed. He's got one particular and very ravishing girl friend - he definitely is all for looks. Went back to Club and changed and had dinner in Club with Bairds, Ronnie, Eileen and A.D.C. Gerald Beay(?). Latter is a dear - completely unspoilt and chatty. I felt at odds with Niall all evening so wasn't too happy.

#### Friday March 8th (1940)

Niall and Maureen came round in the morning - all serene. Last night I felt madly jealous when he talked to Eileen all through supper - so perhaps it is love! Merely feminine possessiveness I fear. Played golf with Eileen - enjoyable. Afterwards we went on to see "Mr Smith goes to Washington" which I loved. It really was terribly good. I incurred the divine wrath by making rather a mess of some parties I'd arranged with Desmond and Worry(?). I really didn't mean to be rude or cool or casual but I suppose it was a bit unusual.

#### Saturday March 9th (1940)

Played six holes of golf with Maureen in morning. Shes starting a cold poor lamb. Niall came and fetched her away early. Mrs Gregory came round and we discussed her coming offspring with relish - maternity garments, morning sickness etc. - really rather fun. Afterwards went round to see Eileen for a while and returned hot and hungry at about 2. Did nothing in the evening except bicycle round to Bill Bowden with a chit. Went to cinema + Bairds and Ronnie - "Bachelor Girl" - great fun. Sat in a row which spoilt it rather. Went home afterwards and had bilious attack.

#### Sunday March 10th (1940)

A wet and chilly day - wrote to Niall in morning and actually sent it off. Always dread his reactions. Met Desmond in the Club in the morning and he's still furious about the parties. After lunch sat about and read. Reminded me very much of Sundays at home - frowsting over the fire with a book and no prospect of getting out and yet a faint urge to do so. After tea Desmond and Worry arrived and we sauntered a short distance in the car(?) and eventually decided on a Cinema - Fetched Eileen and saw "Angels Wash Their Faces" which was rather good. I keep D. severely at a distance.

#### Monday March 11th (1940)

Another wet day - put off tennis which was a great relief. Margo came round in morning and we buzzed round a bit - discussed and pulled to pieces everyone within

range. A good game played slowly. In the afternoon it poured so we had tea first and then went out and played a threesome. It was the most glorious day I've had here - sun and wind and whirling leaves and an intoxicating tang in the air which was ruin to my golf, but filled me with ecstasies of youthful abandon. Went round to see Maureen afterwards who went to bed. Niall was there for aa bit and we all got on awfully well.

#### Tuesday March 12th (1940)

Went round to see Eileen in the morning. We played the grass game and it told her she was going to marry someone called ~~Da~~ Kenneth Holland this year - also repeated my information about David V.(?) Most extraordinary. Clive was here when I got back and asked me to play tennis but I said I'd play golf with Maureen A, instead. A lovely stormy day with thunder and lightening and a black bloodshot sky. My golf suffered accordingly(sic) but I felt hilarious and happy in spite of the fact that Niall was a little cool -

At 7.5 I was picked up by Desmond and Worry in E's car and taken to Mrs Masons' party. There was a terrific crowd there and I enjoyed it a lot. Got on well with Kenneth Malcolm and Boo-Boo and met a new and ravishing young man who I think fell for Margo. She is a lovable creature and I could never feel jealous of her conquests. Afterwards we, plus Nicholsons and attendant swarms had supper in the Club - Cynthia and Noreen both rather quiet. We went off to see a flick which was ghastly - Worry slightly tight and very affectionate - went out of the flick halfway.

#### Wednesday March 13th (1940)

A busy morning - everyone I know in skirts(?) came round to see me. Maureen first with the information that Niall had just left - felt rather hurt that he hadn't come to see me. But why is he always coming to read papers at the Club these days - can it be because of me? I don't think so because he never comes to see me. But perhaps hes too shy and just hopes. Lovely how we interpret things to suit ourselves! Margo came along afterwards looking lovely and I said goodbye with regret. Also Nicholsons and Eileen. Noreen is a bit subdued these days - I wonder if for the first time they are realising their colour - but it can't be for the first time.

Played golf at 4.15 + Bruce, Desmond and Eileen. I played excruciatingly but enjoyed it. At 7.15 went over to the Club and started the most hectic evening and in some ways most miserable for a long time. I was meant to be in Maureens party but Eileen installed herself and stayed there the whole evening. I was furious about it as she completely cut me out and left me to float about at a loose end all evening - and at the end came and apologised. God she is a foul creature in some ways - I was at the point of tears but Peter Cambell - who is pure gold - saved me. Also Boo-boo turned up and I danced with him a fair amount.

#### Thursday March 14th (1940)

I'm in a fearfully confused state of mind - I've fallen absolutely hectically for Boo-boo. It seems to have happened overnight - perhaps its just the wake of a dream - oh I don't know. I keep thinking of his embraces - I suppose he attracts me purely physically; he has from the moment I saw him at that concert they gave. I feel absolutely silly about him - in the evening I was riding about in Richard and Freddie's company and I saw him and nearly fell off in my excitement. But he ignored me completely - oh darling - why



have I gone absolutely bats. He came to the Club in the evening but I didn't get back in time. A bit depressed.

#### Friday March 15th (1940)

Rather a doubtful day - I am still affected by this urgent physical yearning and longed to meet him all day. It went all night in a restless half sleep in which I could control my dreams. Consequently these dreams were very lovely and because I was asleep really, very real. Wouldn't he hoot if he knew - sweet! I don't think I've ever met anyone who attracted me so much all of a bang - its the little boy in him that does it - hidden under the husky exterior so that I feel at the same time weak and protective. I'm gibbering in true Daily Mirror style now - I'd marry him if I could and yet I know nothing about him - so much for glib theories.

#### Saturday March 16th (1940)

Spent a hectic morning arranging flowers - in a fluster and sweat by the time I went off to lunch with Maureen, arriving late. Yvonne was there - I can't get really enthusiastic about her any more - her exaggerated stories of conquests get me down and shes sublimely selfish. Maureen and I went off to a jumble sale and I bought one or two things including a divine yellow hat. Ronnie came back to tea and we played croquet after. We had a dinner party which was frightfully sticky I thought - and went on to Goodbye Mr. Chips This started very well but broke down half way through - felt rather depressed about whole thing.

#### Sunday March 17th (1940)

Nicholson crew came in the morning - had the usual party + usual crew. Brian was looking divine - but is(?) Cynthia's own(?). Noreen was rather deserted - Eileen is making a bee-line for Dick. In the afternoon - after a late and hysterical lunch, and more hysteria afterwards, we played golf. Cynthia and Brian, Eileen and I with Dick and Desmond and Noreen walking round. I loathed every moment as my head was bursting and I was furious with Eileen for monopolizing Dick - she is an annoying creature on occasions. However met Boo-boo afterwards and I think he likes me - angel. Supper with Maureen - v. pleasant.

#### Monday March 18th (1940)

Played Mah Jong in the morning and lost steadily so didn't enjoy it as much as I could. Shows a nasty tendency that - still. Did nothing in the afternoon and enjoyed doing it quite a lot. Went down the bazaar and met ~~the Nicholsons~~ w/ Bubbles. Must arrange something with her I'm getting so darned slack these days. My whole mind is suffused with a suffocating springy(?), miserable happiness. I'm almost certain he likes me but to what extent I can't imagine and I don't see how one can know - crikey I feel 15 again.

#### Tuesday March 19th (1940)

Can't remember anything at all about this - I haven't written it for days because I feel theres so much to say and so little. In the evening went to a flick with Desmond and Worry. Feel rather repulsed by Desmond now and infinitely glad hes going. Fickle

little beast that I am. I know I'm being hard and casual and horrible generally but I've got so much to put up with myself that I can't help causing other people a little hurt occasionally. If there was only someone I could talk to about everything - my leg and so on - instead of continually having to hide it and bottle myself up.

#### Wednesday March 20th (1940)

Played Mah Jong with Mrs Whiteside and Mrs Gardiner. She is a large, bold, downright woman who frightens the life out of me and definitely wears the trousers in that household. Quite enjoyable. Maureen and I went down to watch the polo at 4.30 and I enjoyed it, the South Lancs wives were there and seemed rather nice. Afterwards went to the Club and met Brian and Booboo (x) Went to dinner with Gillespies - others present were Bairds, Dixon and Burg-Moiers(?). Dinner was fun, and the party started off gloriously but Booboo went home and I felt so miserable I couldn't enjoy it any more. He does like me. I know it. Desmond was tiresome and I was horrible to him.

#### Thursday March 21st (1940)

Mrs Marshalls knitting party - actually yesterday. Rather fun - we all told hilarious stories about our underclothes and the embarrassing activities of same. Mrs Likeman particularly - did nothing in the afternoon - its awful not being able to play any games. Met Booboo in the Club in the evening. It was full moon and Eileen and I sat on the steps sat on the steps and talked for ages - she is terribly easy to talk to as she is obviously terribly impressed by what I have to say. She and I are more or less the same as Maureen and I. Went into the Club and met Booboo and arranged to play golf. Dick asked Eileen to go to the Cinema in front of me - luckily I've got it so badly I didn't mind.

#### Friday March 22nd (1940)

Niall(?) and M. came round for a bit. Mummy in bed with mild dysentery. Went to Eileen's for a bit - forgot I had arranged to go to Lillian. Wrote to Bubbles suggesting golf, - but she said she'd got Richard for tennis. However saw him playing golf. So have my suspicions. Played with Daddy and did not appreciate it - my golf gets steadily more appalling. Have told Maureen about Booboo now - I think she's a little supercilious. I have a feeling my correspondence with her will be much easier to cope with than our friendship. Its an exhausting relationship - for me anyhow.

#### Saturday March 24th [Should be 23rd]

Haven't written this for weeks. Spent the morning domestically - arranging flowers etc. Felt pretty feeble and limp. Eileen and I went along for a golf lesson at 4.30 and she got on quite well but I was infinitely worse. Have no ability in any direction where games are concerned. Went beforehand to listen to Bruce's records and we get on awfully well in taste etc, tho' romantically he doesn't appeal to me at all. We arranged to go to a flick and after tea went off. Booboo turned up at the Club and I had to go off and leave him which just on broke my heart. Also Thistleton-Dyer(?) who seems rather nice - I feel I could get to like him a lot if I was given the chance. Film "Zorina(?)" or something was a bit disappointing but I enjoyed it - Bruce also writes.

Sunday March 2-(?)th (should be **25th**) (1940)

Got up at 7 and went off to early service. It was a bit frightening as there were crowds of people and I had to walk the length of the aisle by myself. These things just scare(?) me, and make me feel I'm at school again. Had a cheerful breakfast with N. and afterwards went on to service. Frightful energy but knew he'd be there. He took the parade afterwards. Went along to the Club and talked to Eileen for a bit. At 4.30 had a heavenly golf match with Booboo and another Fourth Lincs. He was adorable to me and I know has fallen a little bit. E. and I had supper with him and Richard and 2 others in the Club and went on to see the Marx Bros - all absolute heaven. A lovely Easter.

Sailed exactly a year ago - Coo-ee!

Monday and Tuesday 25th and 26th (March 1940)

Rather hot, restless empty days. Played golf with M. but walked it and gave up after a bit. Had a drink with Ronnie Eileen etc. Did damn all the rest of the day except feel hot and long for him. Tuesday morning - oh I don't remember any of this. In the evening I know I went to supper with Maureen. It was an awful feeling that it was the last time - something in Maureen makes her so terribly lovable, even seeing her faults and drawbacks as I do. Our friendship is different to any I've experienced before. Ronnie came in after supper and we played the grass game - which I'm losing faith in.

Wednesday 27th (March 1940)

Played Mahjong in morning with Mrs Sumner, Mrs Lander Oldfield and a Miss Mitchell who has come out to marry someone out here. She is a large, good-looking, quiet natural girl - very much a type of big-boned British femininity(sic). Looks a dear. He must be years older. Lost all time. Met Eric Raynor and arranged to go to the dance with him. In the late afternoon Mummy and I went to play croquet with Dolly Baird - all rather a fiasco as he was hours late - I walked it all. Went to dance in evening which was all quite enjoyable in a vague way. I simply haven't got anyone now. I wonder what it is that puts people off and if I'm so startlingly plain.

Thursday March 28th (1940)

Played Mah Jong with same crowd again and lost steadily all morning - horrible game. Got back to the Club to find Nicholson gang installed + boy friends - do dislike that Middleton guy. Maureen had been round with Broad girl who is short, squat, red-faced, beetle-browed, tough and shy. Sounds awful but shes probably quite striking(?). In the afternoon M. called for me and we walked round the golf course with Ronnie and Niall. I rubbed both feet raw just to stop myself from enjoying it. Niall was looking very sweet and behaving it too - something is still left of that, some faintly flickering ember that occasionally leaps into flame.

Up to there the day was lovely but onwards - desperate. Arrived at the Club to find that Niall wasn't coming to the cinema. His last night - the last time he'll see me - so much for my little dream. Oh Niall - maybe you haven't got my heart darling but you've got a large chunk of my mind and it hurts to have it squeezed dry and then thrown

away like lemon rind! Didn't want to go but did - Ronnie, M. and I sat in one seat and I felt miserable and out of it. Didn't even enjoy the film - why is life one long goodbye and wrenching apart of ones dormant feelings to make one realise how dreadfully strong and enduring they are. My goodbye to Niall was short and firmly disinterested.

#### Friday March 29th (1940)

A day of packing and as such horrible. Went down to the Station with Mummy and Eileen and waited a long time on the Station feeling very hot and depressed. They eventually arrived - Maureen very lost and nervous and on the verge of tears. Niall with a forced tired smile on his face. Maureen nearly collapsed so we left and wound our hot and cheerless way home. "Packing is such sweet sorrow" - but where oh where is the sweetness? A wrenching away of something dear and necessary - something that no other person or thing can replace - thats how I felt it. Thats what all partings are - the price one has to pay for knowing a person is the price of giving away part of oneself and being left with only an empty ache. I felt Nialls going more than I thought - he was my first real love, although that love didn't last. But it left a tenderness behind that nothing can mar. Maureen and her sweetness of course, are irreplaceable. In the evening Booboo came to dinner and afterwards we plus Mummy and Eileen and I [came c.o.] went to a concert given by the South Lincs. Booboo was very sweet and took no notice of Eileen which pleased me no end. He does like me, he likes me a lot, but in a funny sort of protective way. I think hes frightened of getting too mixed up in himself. Concert was quite good -

#### Saturday March 30th (1940)

Feeling the Bairds departure badly. Its getting definitely hot now. The afternoons are sulky and horrible - wears ones temper and nerves. The Nicholsons came in the evening and had dinner with us - afterwards we joined a large Dogra party- at first I was terrified but it wasn't too bad - Brian was very drunk and very devoted to me - he is so darned attractive. I occasionally feel a stab of jealousy for Cynthia. But I never feel at ease with him - one has to keep up a swift flow of repartee and never relax and be serious and natural because my natural self is serious.

#### Sunday [March 30th c.o.] March 31st (1940)

A large drink party at Club given by Fullerton - Cynthia told nme her life history and proposals. Tony Brett was one of them - I felt a faintly ridiculous stab of jealousy. Hugh Lane was another - most peculiar - don't think much of him. Tony is obviously the type to fall badly at first acquaintance and mean nothing.

#### Monday (April 1st. 1940)

Went to see Lilian in the morning. Most peculiar to walk into a Victorian hoiuse in India - v. pathetic old bird. Wonder what her past is. Must bring her and Ivy into a play.

Played golf with Bubbles - great improvement in my game. Went to drinks with Bruce afterwards - it was quite enjoyable - Booboo was there but he went early and we came late so I hardly saw him. Somehow everythings changed since Niall left. Booboo doesn't mean as much. Can't see the connection but perhaps psychologically there is



one. Arranged with Bruce to go tea tomorrow - he doesn't attract me at all - and yet i can see that he is attractive. I think its because he is too much a woman's man - slightly self-conscious and knows too many of the answers.

#### Tuesday April 2nd (1940)

Played Mah Jong with Mrs Sumner - lost furiously as usual - get so utterly fed up which is bad.

(change of pen) At lunch time Betty Broad [came round c.o.] rang up and so I had to put off Bruce in order to be in for her this evening. They came round at about 5. She is short and broad with lovely eyes - large and grey with long black lashes and heavy brows. But is not really attractive. She looks too prim and schoomarmish and does her hair in a bun and has no pretty mannerisms, everything about her is too cut and dried. A.D.C. is a nice youth - not very attractive, has nothing much to say but says it at great length. Compared to the twins - oh well, oh hell! Bruce came round and met Booboo, Richard etc. in the Club. Richard is attractive in agey way - much too facile though - told me about his past affairs - sordid!

#### Wednesday April 3rd (1940)

Played golf with Bubbles. Eileen in bed so will probably have to put off tomorrow's golf - blast. Why tomorrows! Went out to drinks with Mrs Sumner, Dick, Jake, Mary Ann (Q.A.) and Thistleton-Dyer were the others present. Latter was very agreeable but a little disappointing - anyway we went on to a flick and danced a bit and I arranged to play golf - he likes me but more from "heart's loneliness" than anything else I fancy. Dick was all over the nursing sister. Got rather a sweet letter from Niall, saying absolutely nothing - but a comforting thought that he wanted to write at all. Ended by "India decays many things. Don't let it destroy your sweetness." Which just exactly typifies his attitude to me!

#### Thursday April 4th (1940)

Mah Jong - Mrs Malmstrom(?). Eight females, none of whom could play golf, so I had to put it off - and died a mild death. Actually it isn't as bad as I imagined - anything like. Went to see Eileen who is in bed - went to drinks with the Lauries - but only stayed five minutes before rushing on to Bruce. He played me his gramophone and we discussed a lot of things. What is it about him I don't like - his rather slimy attitude towards women, as merely bodies for his pleasure. Perhaps - or perhaps his frankness where I'm concerned amounting to rudeness! He held my hand in the flick - "Stars Look Down" - v. good.

#### Friday April 5th (1940)

Miss not having Maureen like anything. Specially in the mornings. Wrote to Thistleton-Dyer saying I would play golf, but felt horribly nervous. Packing feverishly for Naini - ugh! Still it's frantically hot. My golf started off stupendously but tailed off to nothing. He is a dear - very young and shy and lonely but has a nice sense of humour. Went back to the Club for drinks and there met Betty Broad - Teddy Humphries etc. Latter is devastatingly attractive - no end of poise etc. and seems more partial to me than previously. Richard was very cool and offhand - wonder why?

#### Saturday April 6th (1940)

A chaotic and upsetting day. Our tents were pulled down in the morning and spent the rest of the day in the Club. I'd arranged for Broad menage to play tennis with Bubbles and Richard and they turned up  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour late. Bruce came round at about 5. I went home in Bubbles car to the Dak Bungalow, which is much cooler. After dinner Bruce came and picked me up in an old taxi and we trundled off to see "The Man they Couldn't Hang". Very gruesome but good film. He became quite romantic kissed me goodbye, but even that failed to stir the slightest quiver. Our chemicals not fusing properly perhaps!

#### Sunday April 7th (1940)

Was picked up by McLeans in the morning and taken to the Club. There to my extreme joy met Booboo and Brian (not so much joy over latter!) Booboo was looking divine in a blue shirt. However we didn't stay very long. In the evening I walked over to the Club and to my more extreme joy met Booboo again looking divine again in a white tussore coat. Sat with him and Pop Pearson, and later joined by Teddy, Richard and Mac. Teddy monopolised the whole conversation. He's almost too beautiful and stirs me not at all. Rode back through the dark lamplit star-filled night on Booboo's handlebars - bliss.

#### Monday April 8th (1940)

Mah Jong - Mrs Sumner. V. pleasant today as I won. Got a letter from Maureen - the second. Writes quite well but not outstandingly. They must be sailing in a day or two if they haven't gone already. Played golf with Bubbles. Actually only started but it was too steamily hot so we decided to bathe. Met Booboo outside and eventually went in with him and a crowd of others. I was the last, so was he (accident?) and we decided to go to the late Cinema. He drove me there after dinner and we saw lovely thing called "Fast and Furious". He's so difficult to get at and round and into. And I'm not as bad as I was.

#### Tuesday April 9th (1940)

Played Mah Jong with Mrs Bradbury. V. enjoyable Mrs Henderson and Crowde(?) were others. The heat is indescribable - about 104° now. Went down to the swimming pool with Eileen. Hoped to see him but anyway enjoyed my swim. Spent the most awful night, didn't sleep till 4 or 5. Must write a short story called "Mosquitoes" - a night of heat and heartache with an eternal stream of mosquitoes until one watches the holes in the net with nervous horror and that funny buzzing close to ones ear symbolises all torment and horror(?).

#### Wednesday April 10th (1940)

Packing and muching(sic) around all morning. Terribly hot - had my hair done in evening which nearly killed me. Met various people at the Club, Brian among them. Had to rush off to change for the dance - didn't want to go but actually enjoyed it more than usual. We had a party which was quite a success for a change. Dick was terribly

sweet - he talked to me a lot and quite sensibly - said he regarded me as a friend and could always talk to me about anything. Funny - men usually can - and so they don't want to be romantic. Booboo turned up, was adorable and danced only with me, and the way he says "Poor leetle Iris" - well! Wonder if he'll ever [right c.o.] write - don't believe he will somehow. Its his difference I like - I wonder if I've chased him!

## 6 NAINI - cottage, April 11 - October 5 1940

### GRANNY DIARIES

#### NB.

There is a detailed diary for 1932 by Violet, in India, which I have not transcribed (alongside a similarly detailed one by Will).

1940 (numerous references to Bridge and Mahjong left out) (at front: Darling Violet with Mothers best love)

5.5 Billy arrived  
21.5 Iris Guides  
10.6 Italy declares war  
29.8 Arrived Calcutta  
30.8 Left Calcutta  
24.8 Paid Iris allow(ance) up to this date  
31.8 Paid Iris up to this  
1.9 Arrived Madras  
28.9 Paid Iris Rs. 47 Paid Rs. 50

### DIARY

Thursday April 11th (1940)

A ghastly day - felt pretty lousy on the journey and nearly collapsed when I got here - at 3pm for lunch! It is a very sweet little house - but up a fierce hill. It will be lovely to have somewhere where one can sit and look into the sky's blue and the green tree-filled hill-tops and want no more. I do hope I enjoy this season. I'm dreading it but I think it will be better, because its a different crowd and they treat me as a grown-up in the most amazingly changed way. I do hope Dick, Brian etc will take a little notice of me. I wish Tony Brett would come up - I've always had a feeling he might mean(?) ----- (the rest of this sentence is mainly in shorthand)

Friday April 12th (1940)

A day of unpacking and rearranging. Mavis arrived in the evening - she is much thinner and really v. attractive. What love can do to one!

Saturday (April 13th 1940)

Had a long talk with Mavis in the afternoon - showed me all her letters some of which are very sweet. Bertie(?) Osmaston writes her extraordinary letters - their relationship is



peculiar but rather nice. She was terribly in love with him at one time - a mutual attraction. But he is tied to an awful woman - I wonder how many tragedies of that sort there are. "Whom God joineth together - ". What a farce. Mavis has reawakened my dormant feelings for Tony.

Billy is here now and seems to be enjoying life - sailing a lot. But he is still hopeless in company and fiercely critical of the "fun" and horseplay one indulges in at parties. However we ourselves get on much better and can discuss people freely and without restraint. But I wish he'd grow up and take an intelligent view of life and be gayer. I'm so much older than him in every way. Elaine Webster and I are very friendly just now - Eileen has Audrey Hungerford Jackson to stay who is attractive. Alec is here also so they're all fixed up. George Boon also likes Eileen and Pat Bailey. Tony Brett has departed over-seas - I felt an awful shock but I knew it would happen.

#### Sunday April 14th (1940)

Mavis and I wandered about - went to Charlton(Chaillon?) Lodge and met John Buss - her flame. I think he's completely unattractive but probably v. nice. A peculiar voice which makes him sound superior. I've been hearing all sorts of peculiar things about Ronnie, and I've come to the conclusion that I dislike him intensely. He's a snaky, sexy, slimy specimen - so conceited it makes me utterly sick. His feelings for Maureen may have been real but they were probably only a vile sort of possessive animalness - inspired by her ingenuous, timid shrinking desirableness. Passion of the malest and muckiest type. Drink party at McCleans - Landers v. nice Ronnie there!

#### Monday April 15th (1940)

Started my shorthand [at YWCA] - quite amusing but rather P (and 4 shorthand characters) a strain getting there. The others are a rakish-looking collection of Anglo-Indians, but, as always, v. pleasant. Yvonne also frequents the place but is miles ahead of any of us.

#### Thursday April 25th (1940)

It is ten days since I wrote this - due to Naini atmosphere and loss of my fountain pen. I have been leading a pleasantly vague existence - playing golf and flicking with girl friends mostly and struggling with my shorthand. Have got to know Elaine Webster and Pat Bailey fairly well, both above the average in intelligence. My first party is at Chaillon Lodge this evening and I will duly record any matters of interest. Think it'll be deadly - Ronnie and Co.

#### Thursday (continues) (April 25th 1940) (continued)

Well, this Cocktail party, which I was in some faint way looking forward to, was only average and disappointing. The whole of the population of Naini was present, the rather frightening "Bright Young Married's" population. I don't know why, I just can't seem to connect with that type. They all despise me a bit and knowing that I get despicable. John Buss rather saved my life but I do think he's a silly affected little man. He talks such bilge and is over-affectionate, cuddling Mavis in public which is definitely bad form. Something about him is - well second rate. Drank half a cocktail and felt

frightfully fuddled - kept a tight forced smile on my face while a row of shining masks blethered at me

Friday April 26th - Tuesday May 14th (1940)

A long, long time has elapsed since I last struggled with this journal. Nothing very much has happened that could be called definite, but inside I'm a seething mass of conflicting desires and hopes and disappointments. It all started on Tuesday last - exactly a week ago. We were in a party with the McLeans and in the same party was Gerald Bray. He took absolutely no notice of me until  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way through the dance but eventually came up rather tentatively and asked me to dance. And then suddenly he decided he liked me, and we spent the rest of the evening in a huddle. He talked to me in the most marvellous way about everything.

Tuesday May 14th (1940)

We played rather feeble tennis in the afternoon - our own party at the Club. I played one set, but it was all rather feeble. John Henderson and Betty Broad were there, also Mrs Sumner, Ian Lander and a Major Nicholson - a very sweet person. Afterwards we toiled up the hill to drinks with the Farleys - arrived terribly late, but quite amusing. Mavis was there and various other bits and pieces including Maxwell. Didn't go to the dance - felt terribly keen to do so because of Gerald. We haven't been asked to do anything at Government House and everyone else has - I can't understand it - surely they're not going to leave us out altogether, The McLeans are so jolly smug about being asked - Eileen and Audrey in particular.

[I think the section below is the next page for Tues. May 14th but can't be sure, Iris seems to dot about in this diary at random and doesn't always set dates clearly!]

Oh Gerald - isn't this ever going to get any further - "its such a lovely start, I'm aching in my heart, What now?" He doesn't seem to want to go any further. I wonder in my blackest moments whether he meant what he said on that never-to-be-forgotten night. Perhaps he's one of those people who has to get everyone grovelling around his feet and doesn't mind what means he uses. At one party the other night he danced all evening at the Boat Club with a tall grey-haired female but he was looking at me and talked to me and I was watching his every movement. We've got a sort of understanding between us that nobody can mar or even touch. But perhaps I'm only being young and silly and he hasn't given me another thought.

To tell Maureen - Gerald Bray - Broads - Richard etc.

Wednesday 15th (May(?) 1940)

A very ordinary day. Did my shorthand in the morning. I get on very well with the girls and I think they like me. They're so simple and natural. In the afternoon went to a dreary Guide tea at Mrs Cottons. Talked long and pointlessly to a nice girl on my right and ate nothing. Got away early and went for a short stagger with Mummy. Billy and Pat went sailing - I think he rather likes her and shes certainly very sweet. In the evening Mrs Sumner came to dinner and we played Mah Jong. It wasn't very thrilling - she was yawning most of the time and so were we all.

Relieved to get an invitation to the Matelots.

Thursday May 16th (1940)

Went for a picnic to the top of Lyera Kanta(?). Rode up for a very late lunch and a lovely one. Lay in a heavy coma all afternoon, disturbed by Guy talking bilge. Eventually Mavis and I charged down the hill in front of everyone else and had tea at the Boat Club. We had a terrific discussion about love, marriage, ideals etc. She is terribly attractive physically - I think any attraction I have is entirely mental. Alan Coombes is up here - but he doesn't like me very much. He never has I fear - led on probably by Ronnie. Well that sort of thing doesn't disturb me overmuch. Dinner with Betty Broad.

Friday May 17th (1940)

Did my shorthand as usual. We are now on embracing terms which is highly encouraging. The progress of my shorthand is not so I've been asked to apply for a job which I have done but I am doubtful of results. I'd do anything to be independant and feel I was being more than just a burden. But perhaps this is being morbidly introspective. Gerald is more or less a beautiful memory - I see him occasionally looking devastatingly attractive, but I can't believe that I've even talked to him. He's taken me in, as I dare say he has scores of others. But somehow I can't give up hope - yet. Not until he goes to the plains again. Why is life so full of promise and so empty of fulfillment - my life anyhow.

Saturday May 18th (1940)

Had the most streaming cold and felt like murder. Pat, Margo and later Guy, came in the course of the morning. I didn't get a chance to even talk to Margo - not really talk. She seems a bit lost I don't know why, Pat is terribly sweet - she's like Betty in lots of ways - We laugh at the same things and she makes me want to laugh an awful lot. Guy asked me to sail and eventually stayed to lunch. He is really rather a pet - I enjoyed the sail immensely - tho' I got horribly tangled up and spent most of time scrambling out in perilous angles to unravel bits of rope. Guy is an extremely attractive young man - lots of poise and suavity. Lots of money too I should think but not spoilt by it. Went out in the evening to the Cottons(?) who had a private dance in their house. There were quite a lot of people - I wasn't very popular - but I got hold of one particular youth who was very attentive - by name Raymond Stanley. He is a rather ugly, silent but nice policeman. Six of us went on to the Boat Club. But this wasn't as much fun as I expected. Raymond seemed to be exhausted by that time, and Alec and Arthur (Ailline?) weren't at all interested. Alec is jolly rude but in a sort of teasing way that one has to laugh at although one is seething inside. Arthur (Ailline?) Chitty isn't at all my type - people who like me have got to be "deep" - ?!

Sunday May 19th (1940)

Felt absolutely hellish with a foul cold but stumbled down to the Boat House and knitted in company with various other females. Lala Pugh was there talking bilge as usual and vulgar bilge at that. Eileen was there - very smug. Oh I am a cad but I'm highly annoyed, because Alec has asked Billy to dine and dance at the Royal, not me, which I think is absolute incredible rudeness. I felt furiously angry but somehow not

humiliated - he is a vile and revolting specimen - but darned talented with it all. Billy and I went sailing in the evening which was fun. Mavis and Pat came and played Mah-Jong - fun.

#### Monday May 20th. (1940)

There was a terrific storm in the night, thunder crashing, lightening, and roaring rain. It was most impressive and very snug. My cold was greatly improved in the morning but still evident. Didn't go to my typing - played Mah Jong instead - Norah Crowdie, Alice Bennetts and Mrs Sumner. I enjoyed it and won Res(?) 1.11. In the afternoon went to tea and tennis at Baileys. I actually didn't play in the end, nor did Pat. It was rather chilly but enjoyable. Stayed to dinner and went on to see "Hunchback of Notre Dame". I simply loved it - very gruesome in parts. I like Pat more each time I see her.

#### Tuesday 21st (May 1940)

Went up to take the Wellesley Bluebirds in the afternoon - I've got about 50, very sweet but too much of a handful. They seem keen and enthusiastic and I love wielding authority over them. They seem to be swayed awfully easily, soft and pliable and over-affectionate. Got back and fell into a heap, watched Billy go off to the dance with absolutely no pangs and enjoyed an early and pyjama-clad dinner. I'd much rather do that than go to any dance - but for the hope of seeing him and also for the rather patronising scorn that other people pour on you if you're not seen about.

#### Wednesday May 22nd. (1940)

Put off my golf with Maureen Anderson and was glad afterwards as Billy, Pat and I went sailing I adore being out on that lake with the sun in my eyes and the wind in my hair - like a bird "winging wildly over white orchards and dark green fields - On, on and out of sight - - - " My heart sings and so, rather less tunefully, do my lips. All petty worries blow off and there is nothing in life and there is nothing in life but a singing wind and a tugging rope, and the steady swish of cut water. In the evening we went to the Chalet in Guy's party - it was much better than I expected, and I enjoyed it better than any dance so far. Got on well with Edward Walker, Sam Kennedy came.

#### Thursday May 2d. (1940)

Rushed back from work to play Mah-Jong with Mrs Sumner and Eileen Lander - quite fun but I lost heavily. After lunch slept the sleep of the dead. I didn't wake till 4.30. Always feel thoroughly fretful on these occasions. At about 6.30 went and changed for the moonlight picnic. Pat and Mavis joined me and we waked up the hill together - it was a stiff climb but lovely in the starlit coolness. Some chaos at the top about food, but eventually settled down to a lovely supper. Gorgeous sitting round a fire, with the fairy lights on the lake below and a full moon lolling about above.

#### Saturday June 1st (1940)

I really cannot be bothered to write up all these weeks - anyhow, nothing very much has happened. I've been rushing around with various girl friends and going to a few dances



and being nearly a wallflower but not quite. I've seen Gerald at some of these dances and he's always been sweet but offhand. Last Wednesday I met him just as I was going away, and he put his arms round me and called me darling. But Margaret Sloane was there and he danced with her all evening and she was so darned possessive. I felt wild with a sort of hopeless jealousy - but he's given me a crumb of his great kindness. "And I took the crumb and behold it was the Lord's Supper"

[I assumed that this is the continuation of June 1st 1940]

He discussed my sex-complex with me and I told him about John Hodgen - in fact I told him about practically everything because he knew it all already. I've never felt so strangely understood - the "dear acquaintance" one strives to find. He said he could fall in love with me - but of course he won't because he didn't mean it and there isn't a chance. He reminds me faintly of Peter Wimsey - an awful ass in many ways, but clever and polished and serious and comes out with many little French endearments. By the end of the evening I was in a complete state of commotion. He was so gentle and sweet and treated me like a child and yet at the same time very grown up.

He reminds me in some ways of Max de Winter. But I'm not going to go confusing the issue and imagining I'm in love because somebody is sweet and attractive. What I feel for him is "the devotion to something afar from the sphere of our sorrow". He'll never have a chance to make love to me - I think if he did I should be carried right out into the middle of the storm and that would mean hell when it all collapsed. But anyhow its a wonderful experience to have known a mind like that and to have drawn a little of it into my own. I've only seen him once since that evening and he was just friendly but there was understanding behind his eyes. Why he should even like me I can't fathom - everyone simply chases him.

Sunday June 2nd (1940)

A very empty and rather pointless day. I went to see Mrs Sumner in the morning [plus her bag, but didn't stay very long. Then wandered down to the Boat Club and got all mixed up with a Forest and yachting crowd and so felt out of it. Eventually disentangled myself and sat with Eileen, Sam, Jean and Alan and met a fairly presentable young man whose name I don't even know. In the evening staggered up to church but got no benefit and had politics preached at me which was annoying but typical. Went in to see Likemans and then wandered back. Everything in a sort of waking dream of him - !

Monday June 3rd (1940)

Went to typing in the morning or rather shorthand - thank the Lord the original female has reappeared and we may learn something. Was prepared to nothing all day but got a note from Pat asking me to tea so tottered along at 4.15. There was another and strange male there who took absolutely no notice of me so I didn't take to him too violently. Afterwards Pat and I wandered to the bazaar and ordered various things including a hat for me. Probably will turn out unspeakable. Went down to Boat Club after dinner and played Mah Jong. It was a bit boring and I'm always too tired to really concentrate. Eileen, Audrey and Jean (Cookson) Nicholson were 4.

Tuesday June 4th (1940)

Pouring with rain - it looks as if the monsoon had broken. Got a note from Gerald answering mine - felt sick with fright but Lady Hallett will come. Perfectly ordinary letter, except ended "Lots of love" which I clung to like the proverbial straw. Oh hell - I know he doesn't care and yet he pretends to in a way, he loves keeping me chained and himself free. Didn't go to Guides, but sat sewing all afternoon instead. Also didn't go to the dance - the thought of missing Gerald hurt but otherwise I was quite relieved. I never really enjoy myself, my happiest moment is when they play "The King".

Wednesday June 5th (1940)

Staggered down to the knitting party as usual. It was pleasantly boring, and quite useless. Brig Vickers, Col Fullerton and Mrs Boyd came to lunch. It was ditto. Col Fullerton is very unhappy poor man - its awfully tragic his life, everyone seems to have some terrible burden to bear. Brig Vickers wife was drowned last year and Mrs Boyd lost her only son. It poured all afternoon but I went to the VAD lecture and tried to be efficient. My life is a bit futile - I never play any games, just go to classes and flicks and talk scandal, I'm not going to the dance tonight either - and this is the week. Not that I mind at all as I don't think he'll go.

Saturday June 28th (or 29th?) (1940)

Weeks and weeks have gone by - weeks during which this diary has lain behind a box getting bent and battered and the world has got into a most awful mess. France has given way and now we're fighting the whole world and at fearful odds. Oh God, it'll be alright but I feel the dear familiar England of childhood has gone for ever and with it something dearer than one imagined. Air raids have nothing to do with it - its not material - but a beautiful untouched serenity that looked confidently and calmly forward to a world of dreams turned to reality. We're living through stirring, agonising times, but none of it touches us really here. And so none of it gets into this diary. I feel continually oppressed but not anything you could hold onto and pin down. I heard from Niall the other day - funny to think he could be anything important. Gerald is now definitely a misinterpretation. He is absolutely taken up with various married women of low repute and takes no notice of me whatsoever. I can't help being wistfully adoring, but my dreams of him have died. I had a boy friend for a few days - John Radford - very sweet, but one of Mavis's cast-offs! We did a lot together and he gave me rather a half-hearted kiss - half-hearted on my part! But I haven't heard from him since he left and I don't think he really cared at all, and I never felt at all thrilled by his caresses, either in words or physically. I think it was because he was too sudden and not nearly reserved enough with other girls! I think if I'd really tried I could have got him worked up to quite a pitch - an intelligent young man and very clever. Apart from this I have had no particular conquest - not much chance really. I have been to a fair amount of parties - in the last one I met a peculiar individual named Joey Fordham - apparently a gloriously immoral reputation and certainly a peculiarly persistent flirt. An ugly, comic clever little man, terrific clown, lively(?), intelligent in peculiar in every way - a "character". I've also got to know Berry Osmaston - rather a dear and also odd, very nervy and temperamental and moody and flirtatious physically. I'm worried about Mavis - I don't think shes in love with John. Ishbel Fraser is now Mrs. Newley - her wedding was nice, she looked sweet and he adorable. Pat and I are inseparable - she has woken up my whole life and I like her better than anyone I've met out here - even

Margo who is sweet. We gave a Comic Dog Show which was I think a success. Apart from this - what? Just a lazy, fairly happy, restless life - waiting for Something I think - -

Sunday June 30th (or 29th?) (1940)

I washed my hair in the morning but it as a damp misty day so I set off for Dwarhaston(?) with it still wet. Went to Boat Club where I met two peculiar youths and on to lunch at Ingles(?) This was fair, food bad as usual. Afterwards sat and discussed everyone. She (who?) manages to put my back up on every occasion. Then I walked to Boat House and after tea went to "First Love" - it was quite sweet but not as good as usual. Met the Websters and went back to dinner. Met a very sweet youth there - Richard McLinley. He struck me rather particularly hard - can't think why. Actually I think he quite liked me - although I was looking hideous. He wasn't outstanding in any way - but sweet. I have the most wonderful day-dreams about him - his presence is so comforting and at the same time so exciting - in my day-dreams! He has awakened in me something so lovely that I feel it can never have any expression or any fulfillment(sic). All my latent devotion has just rushed out to greet him - but I don't think he wants it. My whole life is centred round him for the moment. Oh why aren't I tall and beautiful and desirable [like him c.o.], so that he could love [him. c.o.]. Perhaps he wouldn't anyhow - I could give him everything and be happy and not expect anything in return. So I have said about many others before him -

Apart from this internal upheaval I've made great friends with Pat Bailey and do practically everything with her. She is more my type than anyone I've met out here I think - we giggle at the same things and talk about poetry and religion, almost like Betty and I used to do. In fact shes more like Betty than anyone here - and she likes me too. Three girls, Pat Clyde, Pat and I, rode out to Bowali the other day, and on to Sab-Tal(?) to bathe. It was terribly hot but rather fun. Pat Clyde is quite nice but v. silent. The G.H. garden party was today - Gerald looking heavenly - he came up and said a few words to me. But he doesn't seem quite as fond as he used "Was it something said, something done" - - - talked to Margo - v.sweet.

**Sunday July 21<sup>st</sup> 1940**

[the day before 18<sup>th</sup> birthday]

Another month nearly - but no matter. It is of the times that I suppose I ought to write - the most important in our history. But others will write of them and anyway I'm so out of it here that they hardly affect me. At the moment we are sitting waiting for Hitler's "Invasion of Britain". 360 people have been killed in Air Raids so far but over 200 of their planes downed.

My birthday to-morrow - And so for a little while reminiscing into my diary, I can relive a year. Looking back to this time last year, I seem to be seeing a different person altogether. Its funny, I've changed absolutely, and yet I've no idea where the change took place. Somewhere about Christmas I think, somewhere about the time I met John Harris. Or was it Tony who effected the change - darling Tony. I still think of him often and feel he could and perhaps will mean an awful lot. My friendships have been full and I've developed the knack for friendship which I used to lack badly. Cynthia, Eileen, Yvonne, Maureen, Mavis and of course Pat - All count me as their friends, as deep friends in some cases. Maureen is an entirely new venture in friendship - and

Thall too in a way – purely platonic but real too. John Harris is quite an affinity – but I’ve had no love letters from anyone. Perhaps that’ll come in time. Now that I’m going to be 18 – I won’t be able to make excuses of youth to myself. All the contacts, all the conversations, the compliments, the caresses – where have they left me – the essential “me” that is alone in being different? Quite honestly I don’t know. To outward view, I’ve improved 100%. But inside – yes inside too I think, because I’m not so introverted, and bitter. I’m a lot cleverer in the way I deal with people – I usually get round them. Oh I don’t know – I don’t know if I’m a nice person pr nasty or characterless or popular or dull – but I do know that just at this moment I’m happy. And I also know that Time will take this moment from me and give me others of pain and others of more intense pleasure. And that, perhaps Shelley was right in saying “Naught will remain but Mutability”. And now there is a fierce storm raging and a terrific beating of rain on the roves and livid purple lightning. And now 17 is at its last gasp. I’m sorry really. I’m so young for my age and so proud of being so old. This thunder rouses strange, inexplicable longings in me – half religious and sweet and yet sad. What is it that moves one, that tightens ones throat and quickens ones pulse in the fierce moods of seas and skies? It is a lovely night to say “Good bye” to 17, the most momentous year of my life. I’ll send it out into the raging darkness from whence it came and where part of me will follow never to return – while rest snuggles into a warm bed.

### **Sunday July 28<sup>th</sup>**

Patricia’s birthday – 19<sup>th</sup>. She was meant to be in Almora, but went down with a temperature poor love. So is still here. The last week has been an age of experience and heart-ache. My birthday wasn’t as happy as it might have been – I seem fated not to enjoy myself at birthdays. Spent a quiet very wet day until the evening when Pat Bailey, Cynthia and Pat, and the 2 Christophers came to dinner. Christopher Vesey was very nice to me at first but in the Cinema he suddenly turned way absolutely and spent the rest of the evening hanging round Pat, playing with her blatantly and ignoring me so utterly that I was sick and miserable inside and got duller and dumber as a result. I can’t understand it “Something said, something done -?” Because I know before that he liked me best. At the end of the evening he slightly compensated by waking up arm in arm – but even then he was dying to push me into a dandy. I felt very cut up about the whole thing for several days – hoping to hear from him and dreading to hear Pat had. But I’m slowly recovering, slightly incredulous and sore still, but alright. I’ve quite got over Gerald, and don’t mind at all if he comes up again or not. I took my Home Nursing Exam the other day and passed, but did very badly, which stung my pride a bit. I think I’ve made a slight hit with Michael Littlewood. Anyhow I’m dining with him tomorrow and will report progress.

### **Monday [July 29]**

I went out to dinner with Michael as arranged & enjoyed it a lot. We started off by discussing religion at great length – he is an intelligent youth & interesting. Why is it then – oh why – that I would rather talk rubbish to Christopher for five minutes? During dinner he told me masses of stories that I knew the end of & had to laugh gaily as if they were new & exciting to me! We went on to see “Honeymoon in Bali” which was quite good. Michael practically broke down the Cinema, but didn’t attempt to hold my hand or anything, which I appreciated. He is a dear, Michael & I think he likes me although not wildly. We got on well & feel comfortable together. But why - - -



## **Tuesday [July 30]**

Pat came to lunch & we did some vague revision afterwards, but mostly talked bilge about men. I like talking to her more than anyone since Betty. We went down to the Boat House after tea & met the Ingles & Michael. The film was v. good, & afterwards Michael asked me to go to the Royal. I went, & haven't enjoyed myself so much for years. Everything went right, everyone was nice to me & I met lots of young men. The surprise of the evening was Wallace Rawlins who I met the other night. He asked me to dance at the end of the evening & then became frightfully intense & wanted to kiss me & was altogether peculiar. I think he must have been tight actually. I'm glad I didn't let him do anything.

## **Wednesday [July 31]**

Spent the whole morning doing my 1st Aid. Took my Exam & got on quite well. Afterwards met Elaine & walked along with her to Boat House. Had tea with Marshalls, both very nice, & saw lots of young men wandering about. Went & had drinks with Summers & two young men from Lincolns. Both nice & I enjoyed it.

## **Thursday [August 1st]**

Went to flick with Ingles & Michael - but it wasn't a very good film. Got a Sea Mail & a sweet letter from Niall. I think he likes me a lot in his platonic, manly, & comforting way. Dear Niall - - - Also letter & picture from Richard who got a distinction. I got one two for my 1st Aid - 90%

## **Saturday August 3rd**

Woke up with usual pleasant feeling of having nothing to do. Spent the morning playing Mah Jong with Sumner, Lander & Mrs Icknoldale - this latter ?slatish looking female but nice. Cynthia came to lunch & we talked a lot of rubbish but I always enjoy it with her. We went for a strole after tea, landing up at the Boat House for tea. Hoped to see "My" young men from the Lincolns but they weren't there. I think they quite like me really - in fact I actually think that Dick Griffin has fallen mildly. But then he'll probably turn off me onto Elaine or Pat before the weeks out. It always happens like that. In the evening masses of us went to the cinema & I enjoyed it like nohow. I was in terrific form & quite popular with everyone. Dick was sweet to me & I think really does like me - he seemed to be looking at me most of the evening, although I only had one dance with him. But I also think t'other one was struck. This is probably all conceit & they are both unmoved but anyway I like to feel it! Elaine didn't win them over either which delighted me. I am getting more attractive I think. I'm going through a very happy time just now - what with Michael & these two. I'm dreading the reaction that's going to follow. Sinking into the abyss I fear. Pat & Christopher Burne are going the pace no end. I think he started it off as a mild flirtation but that he's been carried off into the midst of everything. Pat is pleased but penitent - Audrey's boy friend has gone.

## **Sunday August 4th**

It poured most of the morning, but eventually Cynthia & I staggered down to the Boat House for the odd half hour. They weren't there so it was rather wasted. Athertons, Mrs Hamilton & Gen: McRea came to lunch – quite cheerful, tho' I'm never really happy at these shows. Slept heavily after it till 5, when I got a rude awakening from Pat & we trailed off to church. I enjoyed it “the dim, religious light” always moves me in the evening & even Arch: Cotton's drear sermon didn't put me off. Went to dinner with Cynthia & usual crowd. Dick does love me – but so does “Tubby” & *I* like Dick. Saw “Golden Boy” & liked it a lot. Went onto Boat Club & had row with Mummy after.

### **Monday August 5th**

I sailed with Michael in the afternoon & enjoyed it tho' I was very relieved to be in safely. He let me sail & we tore round doing hectic things. Michael bounding about like an elephant while I shouted hysterically that I didn't know what to do next. In the end we beat John Henry Sykes & so I was quite pleased with life. Michael was very sweet – I do like him awfully in a comfortable, friendly fashion that asks nothing & expects nothing. I think he feels much the same about me. I don't know what his sentiments about Yvonne are but – not romantic I'm sure. Saw Dick & Tubby but didn't speak to either – am going with with them to-morrow.

### **Tuesday August 6<sup>th</sup>**

Toiled up to Bluebirds in the afternoon and quite enjoyed it. On the way back looked in on Mrs Webster. We had quite a long chat about people, and she's nice and intelligent and sympathetic. I do wish things were easier where these things were concerned. Mummy makes it so difficult. Why is there class and colour and snobbishness. Went to dinner with Dick and Tubby at Royal. Cynthia was there, also strange & silent Tarzan-like object who I had peculiar & difficult conversations with intermittently through the evening. Dick was a little bit disappointing & likewise Tubby. But I did enjoy it on the whole, specially snuggling with Tarzan. He rather fell for Yvonne. Most involved.

### **Wednesday August 7th**

A wet day – I was feeling dead so slept for an hour in the afternoon before wending our way up to Sherwood College for one of Binns Binges. They're always terribly suburban shows & I feel vastly superior & young & charming – ridiculous! Pam Rogers was there – I don't like her so much as I did at first by any means. I feel she only cares if there's some man about who she can allure. Her technique is quite good – sort of elusive & temperamental. The show was quite good – mostly singing. When I got back I felt too tired to go to the flick with Dick & tubby & wrote to them, getting a nice reply from Dick. I wanted to go – only --

### **Thursday August 8<sup>th</sup>**

Went to my Shorthand as usual, but Mrs Doran was taken ill so heaven alone knows how we shall get on without her. In the afternoon I sailed with Dick – having previously had lunch with Haileys. Mavis is back, looking happier I think and anyhow perfectly resigned. When I think of the heights to which marriage can and should take you – and

how little she will reach them – it seems a shame. But unavoidable. I adored my sail with Dick, but I was a little bit hurt that he hadn't asked me to the dance to-day. Learnt later that Lala had asked them so felt better. But I do like him – not as much as Christopher – but I do like him.

### **Friday August 9th**

It was pouring, so I missed my typing & asked Pat & Mavis to lunch. Spent a useless morning & they didn't arrive till one. Mavis is terribly vague & funny – but I do like her all the same. Pat stayed on & we went for a walk in the afternoon. It was lovely – cool & misty & fresh – and we talked about all sorts of things in our usual way – just like the walks Betty & I used to go at school. She's so like me that its almost distressing but terribly comforting. Its heaven having somebody like that around. Went up to Binn's again for a debate which was quite amusing – felt patronising as ever!

### **Saturday August 10th**

Played Mah Jong at Mrs Sumners & won. Felt a little bit upset again about the dance to-night but learnt that Yvonne had asked Dick – she is a cad, I'm sure she was determined to wrench him away & spoil my last evening. Anyhow It'll come back on her own head one of these days. It poured in the afternoon but I was determined not to miss our last sail. Tubby wasn't feeling well – I don't think he likes me very much on the whole. I think he's annoyed with me. The sail was absolute heaven – a roaring gale, drenching rain & bitterly cold but we won easily & afterwards drank rum in front of a fire & felt contented. Dick begged me to go to the dance but my pride held me back.

### **Sunday August 11th**

A lovely clean sunny day – I went down to the Boat House & chattered to all the girls in Naini. Said good-bye to Dick & Tubby who didn't seem sorry to see me go. Damn - - - Went to lunch at Dwarhaston with Yvonne & Eileen. Got very annoyed at intervals – but it was pleasant on the whole. They're so bally cock-sure & smug & so soul-less. Stayed for tea & went along afterwards to Mrs Ienoldale to play Mah Jong. She's impossible looking but very witty & nice. Fourth was gaunt, bud-like female – also nice. Her husband is a pale, insignificant young man, terribly polite & correct in every way. Most peculiar couple.

### **Monday August 12th**

It was another rather muggy wet day. Wrote a chit to Elaine asking her to tea & she eventually accepted. After tea we wandered down to the club to play badminton but she suddenly felt terribly shy & so we heat a hasty retreat. Tubby took her to the dance last night which was faintly annoying, tho' I was glad to hear that Dick sat & pined for me – at lest gave a few signs of doing so. Eventually Elaine & I took a boat round the lake & enjoyed ourselves a lot more than we would have done scrambling for men! She's one of the most unusual people I've met – an unusual upbringing probably.

### **Tuesday August 13th**

Maureen Anderson came to beef steak & kidney lunch. She's improved no end & talks quite a lot, tho what she actually says I don't know, because it never seems terribly constructive. We went off to our Bluebuds - I'm getting to dislike them more & more - not personally, but the effort of hailing up there & trying to be officious. Went into the Websters on way back & met Pamela Moss who is adorably pretty but rather too "sweet: & young. Funny - I used to hate being though young, this time last year but I feel horribly superior now. Went to dinner with Stubb's & enjoyed it. They're such a contented couple with two sweet children - who wouldn't give up all the world for love.

### **Wednesday August 14<sup>th</sup>**

Asked Pat to lunch and she came. But we were feeling difficult and don't think hit it off quite as well as usual. We sometimes feel so kindred its chattering - and then some sort of barrier comes up and one gropes and finds no entrance. She stayed to tea and we spent the afternoon discussing books, plays, etc - eventually relapsing into the usual "well he said to me", "Yes, aren't men funny". There's so much to talk about and yet, so terribly, pathetically little. Tony Lynch-Staunton came & fetched me to play badminton with Elaine & Maggey Moll & Pam Moss. Was a bit out of it I think.

### **Thursday August 15<sup>th</sup>**

Promised to go to tea at Y.W.C.A. as it was Lena's birthday. She is a dear kid in every way & intelligent. Went back & eat tea in a sticky silence - At least I was chattering gaily but there was a terrifyingly polite atmosphere about. Afterwards watched a cinema show for a bit. Went to the Chalet in the evening - our party but Dutch so a trifle embarrassing. I thoroughly enjoyed it - I thought Maggie Moll rather liked me but its probably a delusion as he also liked Pam Moss. Breaks definitely limes me, but in a paternal way. Ended up in more or less of a drunken riot. Bit I was confident & happy.

### **Friday August 16<sup>th</sup> CURSE [period]**

Mrs Hamilton to lunch - amusing as usual - a dear but touchy I got the curse in the night so felt pretty rotten. But went down to sail with Breaks. At first he wouldn't take me out as it looked rough but soon gave in. We had a nice sail up the lake but coming back were completely becalmed & it started to drizzle. So we retired & drank rum. He is rather sweet, & limes me but only as a kid to be protected & teased. That's how I like it to be too. Went to watch the badminton for a bit but didn't feel up to competing for the attentions of Maggie Moll so left.

### **Saturday August 17<sup>th</sup>**

Woke up with a cold and headache but played Mah Jon all morning. Felt pretty lousy Learnt that Breaks is married - got quite a shock & felt a little bit upset but very sorry for him. He must be unhappy - I wonder if they're separated or anything. Poor Sweet, no wonder he's a bit peculiar. Ian came to keep Eileen Lander & Mrs Sumner company for lunch. I do adore him. Afterwards, feeling mouldy - I went to have my picture taken. Then fell into a hot deep sleep till 5. In the evening went to a party with Gen McRea & Bill B. Quite fun - All old men tho'. Maggie was there but not in our party - also Breaks. It was just a little bit dull.



## Sunday August 18<sup>th</sup>

Sailed with John Stubbs in the morning. It was a dreary day – dead calm & drizzling. But I enjoyed it as we talked a lot and didn't worry much about being last. In the Boat House afterwards met a ravishing young man but hardly had time to say anything to him. I didn't go to drinks with Landers, but lunch with the Baileys instead. Spent a lazy & liverish afternoon talking and knitting & feeling runny & miserable. After tea dragged Pat out for a walk. We wandered along in the mist, talking desultorily, singing & gradually feeling better & happy. It was dark by the time we got back but we both felt pleased with life.

## Monday August 19<sup>th</sup>

A horrid day. I spent the whole of it indoors with a cold & got frowsier & frowsier. My pictures came and one is quite sweet – better than I expected anyhow.

## Tuesday August 20<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday Sept 3

What a long, long time and how very eventful. I don't know why I couldn't pluck up courage to write before – now it's almost overwhelming and I don't feel capable of coping. It's the people who've been up here who are so amazing and nice and annoying and amusing and altogether upsetting. The two chief ones were Bosun and Maggie Mott, and I've also fallen desperately in love with a married man by the name of Parbery. This latter has really engrossed me more than anything else – so like my Gerald affair that I become pathetic. All based on physical attraction and one moment of Semi-Coma. It was like this – Pat & I went to a Chalet dance with Maggie & Bosun & they forced champagne on us which was my undoing. Pat was getting more attention, I felt drowsy & odd, & Parbery was sweet to me. That's all there was to it – but the stars shouted & chased each other around the sky & there was no end or beginning to things. We sat on a step together & he stroked my hand & kissed me, gently, & then we went back to where everyone was staring & smiling. And he probably forgot everything – but I had a new bursting feeling inside that not even the effects of champagne could smother. Why must I respond so passionately to the wrong people – it's maddening and inevitable. He's started the same flow in me and it'll run miserably for a bit and end up somewhere as a trickle of hopelessness and despair. He goes down to-day – oh damn. Oh darling!

Otherwise it's been All Bosun and Maggie. Bosun is odd – sometimes I think he likes me best and then he turns off completely onto Pat and so it goes on. He's rather crude & peculiar – Maggie is definitely nice, but has no particular feelings for me, tho' we lay on some stairs for ages one night.

I've been behaving rather oddly latterly, whether I've been gay and daring and modern or just cheap and shoddy I'm not sure. It's very difficult. I think drink has been my downfall and will always be. Most trying – but Pat is even worse than me. For the last fortnight I've been staying with the Baileys and loving every moment. The house is full of beds to lie on & chuck about lots of confidences. When we're not doing anything else we play golf in the evening & come back for coffee & a talk in the front of the fire. From there to steaming baths & dinner – and so to bed. A happy routine & a friendly one. Pat & I had long conversations about nothing in particular & went out to all the dances. I think she eventually wrenched all my boy friends from me – Bosun in particular. I don't know where I go wrong – but I can't keep my grip at all. Pamela

Moss, the loveliest girl of us all, doesn't seem to be so devastatingly infallible after all which is a slight compensation.

I think the reaction for all this gaiety is swift approaching - I'm not going to enjoy the September season at all probably. And then Bareilly and similar agonies down there - Oh hell why aren't I lovely or an idiot or buried in Scotland. I heard from Maureen & she seems to be living a pretty lonely life - but I'd do anything to join her in the drizel of Elgin I think absence has made Malls heart grow fonder.

At the moment my day dreams are back where they started from - Michael H. I always feel, at the back of my mind, that he is what I want and the others are only to pass the time. Its peculiar tho' how only one day with him has lasted nearly 2 years and how I always run back to him when I am sick and tired of shallow pretences. Something at the back of my mind tells me that he is the real thing and that we will find each other. But the next thing I shall hear is that he is married and so it goes on! Oh Michael darling wait for me - Mummy and Robert have arrived - R. is as peculiar looking as ever but very sweet and good - will be nice to have about.

### **Thursday Sept 12<sup>th</sup>**

Went to my Shorthand. According to the dame we are now doing 100 words per min: but I cant say I believe her. In the late morning Pat came along & eventually stayed to lunch. It looked murky so we didn't play tennis with Mosses as arranged, but Mah Jong instead. The room was very hot & there was a lot of singing & shouting & my head nearly burst by the end. However all quite amusing in a childish way.

### **Friday 13th**

A dull but pleasant day - I went out in the afternoon & weighed myself - it was a nasty moment. So I went to the Websters to take some of it off.

### **Saturday Sept. 14**

I washed my hair in the morning & sat in the shady sunshine to get it dry - the hours & procession of clouds through which an indignant sun burst at intervals. I am now reading the "Thinking Reed" by Rebecca West. It is very good style but I am a little disappointed - her short stories are better. In the afternoon Pat, Pam & I went to tea with Cynthia & afterwards played tennis at the Club. I was in much better form & really not playing badly. I feel there's a lot of potential talent in me, but it never becomes real talent. Went to bed early & felt relieved to do so.

### **Sunday Sept 15<sup>th</sup>**

Oh glory, its all started again - and with somebody I don't want. I met him at the Boat House this morning for about two minutes and he took my address - a blonde Tibetan Cave Man, short and flirtatious. I went back to lunch with the Baileys & after a pleasant innocuous afternoon I came back to domestic comfort at home. This was rudely disturbed, however, by afore mentioned Tarzan who asked me to dinner and the Cinema. He behaved extraordinarily in the Cinema, on a Sofa - quite revolting in fact. And on the way back told me horrid lurid stories about all the women he'd slept with and the pros and cons of the whole subject. I wouldn't let him kiss me - nasty man!

## **Monday Sept 16**

Wrote to Cynthia to come & see me in the morning – duly recounted my last night's adventures to her & she was duly impressed! Went up to fetch Robert in the afternoon & spent the evening wandering round shopping with Cynthia. Eventually landed up at Audreys & McLeans – Eileen is looking pale & interesting.

## ***Tuesday Sept 17***

Pat, Polly Moss & Mrs Maloney came to lunch & we were girlish & hysterical for some time & then went off to Bluebirds. Here we laboured heavily with folk Dancing for some time. I went to the dance with Audrey and her boy friends, both very sweet. My one was very ugly but amusing & fairly sophisticated. Enjoyed it. Tuppence was getting off with the Tibetan – I wish her joy.

## ***Wednesday Sept 18<sup>th</sup>***

Cynthia came to lunch and we spent science hours discussing nothing in particular. She seems very much in love – it's a childish simple sort of love that only asks for companionship. But I suppose that's as good as any. I wonder if I shall have to be content with that or if I shall get my "Precious Bane".

## **Thursday Sept. 19<sup>th</sup>**

Trekking up to see Cherry Vincent in the morning – a vast, terrifying, sophisticated girl who is rather an outcast here. I like her in a way – I only wish I knew how much of what she said was true. She talks better than any other girl. She is the essence of emotionalism – can't decide. I wish I was a better judge of character. I wish I could say – "that's a worthwhile person" directly I met them – and keep to it. I see every side so clearly and consequently dither until the emotional side decides whether affection is going to be poured out or withheld. The party for the evening was put off. I went to lunch with Bayleys & messed about there all afternoon. Then tottered down shopping with Cynthia & drunk coffee in a pitch dark Boat H with the rain pouring down outside & a dim, magical sense of security all round. She is just beginning to realise the full significance of marriage – and feeling a little bit overawed and nervous. I would have thought of that from the very first, but her mind is so much simpler, purer. I don't think she'll be a very passionate wife but perhaps Pat won't mind that. Oh I want so much from marriage, I know I'll be bitterly disappointed.

## ***Wednesday Sept 25<sup>th</sup>***

I am lying in bed in a blouse & vest, propping this diary against scarlet-blanketed knees, & feeling like death. The wireless is blaring discordantly in the next room & Soley is heavy on my legs. My head & tummy are revolving slowly & monotonously & the future looks grim & blank & pointless. A lot has happened since I last wrote this which I will try to summon sufficient strength to describe. But just for now, just until my bath is ready & my pillows straightened, just while all hell is expressed in an aching elbow & crumbs under my neck, I shall not attempt anything so strenuous. "Gussel tai, Miss Sahib".

I feel ever so much better now! I had a bath & ate an egg & some baked custard & can face the future & the past, with fortitude.

Last week end Sept.20 General Macrae drove me down to Lucknow for Margo Boyds wedding. We started at 9 in the morning & arrived at 5.30. A thoroughly tedious journey but he was very sweet. We went to the Boyds first, & were introduced to Bridegroom & Bestman. Former is very sweet, tall & fair & good-looking – rather shy & simple. Latter small & dark & ordinary – anyway engaged. I was driven to Bishop's house – a vast place, like a Mogul Palace, but they themselves tiny & homely. They're like a couple of apples, she a rather pathetic withered little crab-apple, he a smooth, round rosy pippin! I had a long tepid bath which was very refreshing & then changed. I dripped profusely meanwhile & felt lost & nervous. The Boyds had a dinner party which I didn't enjoy terribly – I was clouded with heat & fatigue Margo was definitely cold & all over Sarah which made me miserable. She has a stupefying effect on me, though I adore her. Probably because she just caught me at a bad age.

The next morning I potted round looking at zoos & making polite conversation & in the afternoon read a book about a plain Victorian girl who finds her heart's desire in the clerical profession. Fairly alright.

The wedding was lovely – the fans whining, the church full of flowers & everything softly lamp-lit. A quiet, stirring, scented atmosphere, & Margo was looking beautiful. The reception afterwards was hellishly hot & the fans receding as you approached them. I hardly had a chance to talk to Margo but she looked radiant & I'm very confident about her future. Sarah Macqueen gave a vast party that night – rather frightening, as they were oldish married people, all terribly nice, but Civil. The next day we motored back – terribly tiring & I felt like death.

## **Tuesday 24th**

Mavis's wedding day. The Birthday of her life – I wonder. Spent the morning at Aidwell, trying to be Useful, most of my efforts falling rather flat! After a bouffet lunch we went up to change, my tummy revolving slowly. I hope to god I don't limp or trip or otherwise exhibit myself.

The dresses looked adorable really only were embarrassingly long. We minced up the aisle in fairly good form, but there was confusion on the altar steps and we all railed off much too soon. Consequently there was nobody to give the wretched girl away & the Best Man only rushed back to hurl the ring at the last moment! Everyone was very complimentary, & Pat certainly did look sweet though I'm not so sure about myself! Mavis was fairly calm – I don't know what she was feeling, happiness or fright or just nothingness. She looked very sweet. After the whole thing was over I was so tired I could hardly think – but had to go out with the Best Man. This is Bill Howson, a small, dark, hairy object, brilliant at games but not very likeable. Dances beautifully, but is rather silly, conceited empty & rude. Pat didn't come owing to confusion & I left early. With a little... [nothing more]

## **Monday 30<sup>th</sup> September**

The Ramsay Ball. A rather dreaded day in a way. Went to Shorthand in the morning and afterwards took Robert for a ride. In the afternoon Pat & I went to see a matinee of Louis Pasteur. We joined Mrs Clark, Ivan & Pam Moss. This is the latest family who have burst in on our horizon. Absolutely marvellous. Mrs C is a rather battered looking female, young to have grown up sons, vague but amusing. She writes & does wonderful



treks & thinks about things and I adore her altogether. Ivan, her son, I'm also mad about. He's rather good looking, charming, voice and the most beautiful manners & friendly good-will with everyone. Unfortunately he's very much in love with P.Moss. I could fall so badly, but I'm not letting myself. Oh why is she so dreamily lovely – it isn't fair. I have as much right to be, more really. Perhaps I shall be glad I'm just me one day. The Ramsay Ball was actually fine – and I held my own quite well, though of course Ivan danced nearly every one with Pam. I do adore him so, he was sweet to me all evening, as to everyone. Brian got tight very quickly & took on Pat & me in turn. Michael & Elaine had a quarrel of some sort. I rather like him, but he gets on her nerves apparently. Geoffrey Haig swam in & out of our party & danced with most of us in turn. He's very sweet. After the dance was over we tottered off & raided the Bailey house for food. Eventually concocted strange & indigestible meal. By this time I was dead to the world & wanting Ivan terribly.

But there's no hope there so blot out his name their, record one lost soul more! His mother asked me to stay in Jubbulpore so I shall always be able to keep in touch.

### Thursday October 3

I'm feeling utterly and absolutely miserable – a deep, choking sort of unhappiness that has arisen out of nothing and will go back there leaving one more tiny scar that will make up the general wound. Why must it flood over me in sickening waves, this unknown terrifying sorrow that is a part of everything, yesterdays griefs and to-morrow's loneliness and the illimitable unending misery that is sweeping homeless round the world seeking a resting-place. Perhaps it's the unanswered prayers, the unfulfilled dreams, of countless generations that are doomed to wander and torment us –this is getting incredibly whimsical and Barryish. Oh but I am feeling unhappy. I came in from the cinema and laid my head down and cried. There is absolutely nothing to look forward to and nothing to look back on. Just nothing all round. Pat is a bit disappointing just for the present. Bosun was up to-day but doesn't care a bit for me, which doesn't worry me.

## 7 DONALD MACFARLANE AND HIS FAMILY TO 1939

I was much more influenced by my mother and her family, but will start with my father's side since that is where my name came from and more than half of my ancestry is Scottish.

It is strange that it has taken me so long to get to grips with my Scottish ancestry. It is clear from my early letters that I was very proud of my Scottish family links and enamoured of Scotland from my early days. A number of my happiest holidays were spent in Scotland, and later in my life I visited my parents on their retirement croft on North Uist in the Outer Hebrides.

Yet apart from my parents and my grandparents (and uncles and aunts) I never took much interest in the deeper history, that is to say working out where the clan lands were, where my various ancestors were ministers etc. But now, sixty years later, my quest for family ascendants takes me back up this particular stream.

A first point to make is that my genetic make-up is more than half Scottish. As it seems very roughly, the half of me coming through my father is more or less undiluted Scottish, while on my mother's side about at least one quarter comes through the Scottish Stirling family. This makes me five eighths Scottish, two-eighths English, and one eighth German/Dutch. This is all a surprise to me. I suppose being educated and living in England over the years I've thought of myself as mainly English.

In fact, while the Macfarlane's are the main stream, they are earlier fed into by at least three other important families, the Bennie, Kennedy and McNicoll families. All this is best shown through a family tree, but in essence the connections are as follows.

My father's mother was originally Florence Bennie. My grandfather Archibald's father was Reverend Donald Macfarlane, who married Anne Kennedy. Anne Kennedy's grand-mother was Mary Macnicol, which links me to that large family.

### **Grand-mother Bennie and her family**

At present we have worked the genealogy back to Thomas Bennie who was born in 1807 and was a farm servant in Falkirk, Stirlingshire. He and his wife Ann had five children. The fourth, William, was born in Motherwell 1845 and died in 1931. In the census of 1891 he was in Falkirk, married, a foreman boilermaker, married to Isabel.

They had four children, the oldest of whom John Willis Bennie was born October 1865 John was my great-grandfather. He was married in 1887 in London. In the 1881 census he was an analytical chemist, living in Poplar, the son of William Bennie, and engineer. In the California census of 1900, he was in Keswick township, California Shasta county, aged 34, who had immigrated to the U.S. in 1898, he was a superintendent (smelter), could read and write, had not been unemployed and rented a house. His wife, Lizzie, was born in 1868, and had been in Scotland in 1868 of Scottish parents.

They had three children at that time, Florence (my grand-mother), born in September 1888 in Spain, could read and write, Isabella, a daughter born in August 1890, born in Scotland, and John, a son born in England in 1894.

A New York Passenger List for September 1912 records the passenger John Willis Bennie, aged 45 years, a mines manager, whose last permanent residence had been Arizona, U.S.A. In 1914 he was of Clifton, Arizona, and in 1917 seemed to be working for the Shannon Copper Company.

William Bennie's wife Lizzie was Elizabeth Jack, daughter of Alexander Jack and Mary Duncan, born in 1868 in Scotland. She was noted at marriage as of Cheapside,

London, daughter of Alexander (deceased) pawnbroker. Their children were Florence Mary (born 13 October 1888), my grandmother, and Isabella, born 18 August 1890. At this point their father was noted as a chemist. Isabella married William Harrison. Their younger brother was born in September 1894 in England, but I know nothing more about him.

This brings us down to my father's mother, my grandmother Florence. My father married Florence Mary Bennie on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1915 in El Paso. Though of a Scottish family Florence herself had been away from Scotland for all of her life. In the California Census of 1900, she and her family are described as following:

1900 California Shasta county, Keswick township, Census 25.6.1900

Bennie, John W. head, white male, born Oct. 1865, aged 34, married 12 years, born Scotland, father and mother born Scotland, immigrated to U.S. 1898, 2 years in U.S., superintendent (smelter), can read and write, no months unemployed, rents house - Lizzie, wife, born Jan. 1868, 32, married 12 years, born Scotland, father mother same - Florence, daughter, born Sept. 1888, 11, born Spain, can read and write, no months in school, immigrated to U.S. 1898 - Isabella, daughter, born Aug. 1890, 9, born Scotland, (as sister, except reading etc. not filled in) - John W., son, born Sept. 1894, 5, born England, (as above)

Otherwise there is little information of her early life. At the age of about 22 she visited Scotland, as shipping records show.

1910 Sailed with her brother (Willis) from NY to Glasgow on the Furnessia, arriving 28 Jun 1910. Travelling with a number of teachers. Neither has an occupation.

1910 Sailed with her brother from Glasgow to NY on the Caledonian, arriving 18 Sept 1910

Birth of son John Alan 1918 living at 3300 Montana, El Paso, Texas

Living Monterey, Mexico according to passport dated 1934

There is a brief but warm portrait of Florence by her son Alan in his *Memoirs*

Mother was a very loving and very capable in all respects – housekeeping, cooking etc. She could make a “home” in the most difficult of conditions. Her early education was in El Paso, thereafter she took an M.A. degree in Anne Arbour University. Married in 1915 aged 24. Thereafter she followed my father round the various mines in Mexico, always coming to El Paso, Texas for the children to be born. Quite a few of mother's adventures were written up for the Chambers magazine. (We have a copy of at least one of them – see extracts below). At the outbreak of War 1940 (when America came into the fray) mother went to the Bahamas to look after her mother.

After the War my parents came back to the U.K. in 1947 with very little money. They stayed for a while in Charmouth sharing a house with Iris and her family. They moved north to Scotland and helped the Smiths run a Hotel helped the Smiths run a Hotel first on Loch Tummel and then near Blacklunam. I believe the Smiths were

distant relatives and very nomadic. They were two married brothers and seemed to keep moving from place to place and able to turn their hands to many occupations ie hotels, second hand cars, antiques (?junk), crafting. Very highland Scots, and Mrs Smith had the gift of second sight and had seen several ghosts. The other Mrs Smith lived in a small caravan with her husband – it seemed small, because being over 20 stones in weight there was barely room for her in it.

Later my parents became caretakers at Corrydon Shooting Lodge in Glenshee – a peaceful last two years for my father. After his death my mother found a job as Housekeeper to a wealthy family in the Lothians. They suggested and paid for lessons and my mother could drive a car. However during the third lesson my mother had her first heart attack, and came to live with us. She had 2 or 3 heart attacks before dying in Law Hospital in 1955, a contributory factor I am sure was that she always brushed her teeth with salt!

The one personal record I have of my grand-mother is her account of her hair-raising first trip into Mexico to join my grandfather. Here are some extracts from it, which show that she was a proficient writer, which is not surprising given that she received an M.A. at Anne Arbour University [to follow up – what subject etc.]

## INSERT SOME NICE PHOTOS

I do remember Florence from those holidays better than my grandfather and like Alan her son I remember her as a very warm, loving and intelligent person – who had faced the extraordinary tough life of an engineer's wife, apart from most of their lives from her growing children, and retiring with very little money to an impoverished life in the Highlands.

## Grand-father Archibald Macfarlane and his family

Leaving on one side, for the moment, the Kennedy and McNichol ancestors, we can concentrate on the Macfarlanes. I shall not go into the deep history of the Clan MacFarlane, back to the Earls of Lennox, centred on the area around the north of Loch Lomond and the end of Loch Long. With its war cry of 'Loch Sloy' (after which I named my first boat), particular tartan, which I wore at school in my kilt, and remote links to several famous Macfarlane's, it provided a romantic backdrop to my life. Instead I shall concentrate on known ancestors, who rather prosaically start only in the early nineteenth century with a boat builder.

Duncan Macfarlane was a joiner and boat builder at Tarbert, Loch Fyne born around 1819. Almost all that I know of him at present is the interesting note in the book on 'Donald Macfarlane of Gigha by Sydney Smith (p.25). He writes: 'About the same time (1843) another Duncan of the clan was building boats at Tarbert in Kintyre. Known far and wide he was for the strength and stability of his craft; but also for this, that he designed the type of fishing boat that goes by the name of the Loch Fyne. It commended itself recently to a commission of experts from Japan, appointed by their Government to visit Europe and report as to the best kind of fishing smack.'

He had four children, the second of whom was Donald, born 11 January 1819 in Tarbert and dying on 28 October 1879. He was my great-grandfather. He was Minister of Muckairn Parish, Taynuilt, near Oban then of Killeen and Kilchenzie, Kintyre, for



28 years. He was married in 1858 to Anne Kennedy, the daughter of the Rev. Alexander Kennedy of Jura. His youngest son Archibald Kennedy was my grandfather, born in 1876.

Sydney Smith in his biography of another son, the Rev. Donald of Gigha, gives a short description of the Minister of Killean. After giving a detailed description of the Parish of Killean, he writes as follows (p.32-3)

‘Of this Parish, the Rev. Donald Macfarlane, the father of the subject of this biography, was minister for twenty-eight years. His former charge was that of Muckairn Parish, Taynuilt, not far from Oban. There is in the latter none, it is said, that remembers him, but some years ago his son Donald happening to visit it met an old man who did and who spoke to him thus: “Your father opened a well here that has never ceased to flow, and please God it never will.” There are traditions of rich voice, poetic imagination and popular appeal. These gifts and graces mark his ministry in Killean also, but in the latter there is by all accounts a fuller self-revealing. He showed himself an enthusiast in the cause of the education of the people. Among his enterprises were the building of a school and teacher’s house where none had been, and the rebuilding of an old school fabric. Not without drafts on his own bank account, unwearied effort of persuasion with parishioners and heritors, prolonged negotiations with these last, were these projects carried through, and in furthering of his high ends he was led to publish a certain Gaelic pamphlet, admirable, it is said, both in form and substance. [Incidentally, ironic that it was my mother, mainly English, rather than my father, a proud Scot, who learn Gaelic later in life and made a renowned translation of Gaelic folk stories!] He was a Churchman of a type that was formed in part by the ecclesiastical controversies of the time, and he was as quick to grasp his sword as his hand was skilful in the play he made with it in defence of the Church of his fathers. He was something of a commandant in his relations with his congregation, and addressed them after that manner, but none questioned his right.”

He had a number of children, several of whom influenced me by opening up the connection to India. The eldest was my great Uncle Alexande or Alex who was born in 1859. He became a tea planter in Assam for 51 years and retired in 1929. At some point he is noted as being a private in the Assam Volunteers. Both these foreshadow my father’s later career. Something of Alex’s character is shown in the short account of him in my Uncle Alan’s unpublished *Memoirs* as follows: ‘I never met him. Unmarried. Tall, well over 6 ft and overweight 18 stones. He was an Assam Tea planter and lived life to the full. A heavy smoker of cigars and heavy drinker of whisky, when he gave a party which was fairly frequent it would last the weekend. ... About 5 years before he was due to retire Uncle Jim Elliot asked him if he had saved up for his retirement or was he going to live on the manse with his brother. This so startled Uncle Alex that he changed his ways and started to save. In some respects it was fortunate for him that he died of a heart attack disembarking at Tilbury Docks in 1929 on coming home to retire. He had managed to save about £5000 which helped to buy a bungalow in Inverness for his unmarried sister Jessie and brother Robert.’

The next brother followed his father as a distinguished minister on the west coast of Scotland. This was the Reverend Donald Macfarlane, born 11 February 1861 in Killean Manse. He died on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1923 in Gigha Manse. There is extensive information about his life and character in the biography by Sydney Smith, *Donald Macfarlane of Gigha and Cara* (1925). I shall incorporate this elsewhere, for the moment I shall just note the outline of his life.

Donald went to Glasgow University to train as Minister in the Church of Scotland. He graduated in 1879 and was ordained minister aged 21. He became Minister in

Morven on the west coast of Scotland. In 1907 he transferred to the Parish of Gigha and Cara, western islands off Kintyre in Argyll. There he stayed until his death in 1923. He had been designated as moderator of the church of Scotland in the year that he died of tuberculosis.

There are many stories told in the book of his warmth, humanity, humour, strength and saintliness. He clearly was a central figure in the family of that generation though he did not marry. My father, however, never met him since he died five years before my father returned to England. Certainly my own identity has been shaped by the knowledge that there was this Celtic 'saint' ministering in the Islands to whom I was distantly related. I remember mentioning him with pride, for example, during my interview for admission to Oxford in 1960.

The next child was great-aunt Alice, born on 11 January 1863. My uncle Alan describes her thus in his *Memoirs*. 'She became housekeeper to a wealthy Gentleman Farmer in the Lothians whose wife had died leaving two young children. She married Broadwood and had a child of her own. Broadwood however was a gambler and lost his money and farm leaving Aunt Alice with barely enough to live on. For instance he sold a Raeburn painting to buy a Race Horse which had to be destroyed after falling in his 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> race... She was a very Victorian type Lady.' My father and uncle Alan used to visit her during holidays from their boarding school at Dollar.

The next child was great-uncle John. He was born on 9 June 1864 in Killean and died in 1919 in Calcutta. My uncle writes of him: 'unmarried - I heard very little about him except that he joined the British India Shipping Co. (as an Engineer?) and just become Manager of the Calcutta Office when he died in 1918 of some tropical disease.' In fact he seems to have died in Calcutta in 1919. He also at some point joined the Calcutta Scottish Regiment, where he was a Lieutenant. This was the second of the brothers to go out to India and to foreshadow my father's career there.

Ministers had large families, most of whom did not marry and great-aunt Jessie, the next child was born on 26 January 1866 at Killean and died on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1938. My uncle Alan writes of her: 'As opposed to her rather tall and regal sisters Aunt Jessie was short and dumpy. She was housekeeper to her brother Donald in the Manse in Gigha for many years & then kept house for Uncle Robert in a rented Farm House (Drummond reach) on the Black Isle. They did not farm however - Later they moved to a new bungalow in Inverness. In the early 1930's Donald and I spent Easter Holiday with them in the Black Isle and then Sheila and I used to go to the Inverness Bungalow. Aunt Jessie was a born housekeeper - her cooking was plain but wonderful - to this day I can remember her pork bannocks. She was very kind and certainly spoilt us.'

The next child, great-aunt Annie, through her marriage probably had more influence on my father and myself than any others apart from my grandfather. She was born on 20 February 1869 and later married James Stenhouse Elliot ('Uncle Jim') and the couple became virtual parents to my father when he came home from Mexico. Thus it is important to sketch in the character of this couple who more than anyone influenced my father's career.

My uncle starts his account of Aunt Annie and Uncle Jim as follows.

'Aunt Annie (father's Sister) married Uncle Jim. 12 Priestfield Road, Edinburgh. This was my home from 1930 (when I was 12) till 1946 when I got married. The Elliots treated me as a son and certainly they were the "parents" I seldom saw. After my father lost his job in 1936 Uncle Jim financed me through University (no grants in those days, though I did get small help from the Carnegie fund.)'

He then writes of Aunt Annie: 'Aunt Annie – was a wonderful, loving and kind person, deeply religious, and very “Victorian” in bearing and outlook. One would never (as a child) dream of disobeying her. She was well read, intelligent and the calmest of rather an excitable Elliot family. I certainly have the fondest memories of Aunt Annie and I can in all those years remember one quarrel (and that was my fault).'

Personally I do not remember any of the details of my father talking of her, though I seem to remember that he was very fond of her.

As mentioned, Uncle Jim, of whom my father often spoke, through his contacts and money played the central role in my father's career. He not only foreshadowed and paved the way into the Assam Tea Company, but also anticipated in his short military career in the Boer War the short period my father would spend during the Second World War in an Assamese Regiment. Furthermore, my later enthusiasm for trout fishing, which I had traced to my father, clearly goes back to Uncle Jim and holidays my father spent with him. Even the family holidays we had around Ullapool were a reflection of my father's early holidays in that area with Uncle Jim's family. I remember some of the stories of fishing and walking which my father told me.

[See Photograph of Uncle Jim]

Alan gives a very full account of his uncle, as follows: 'Uncle Jim aged 19 with £100 in his pocket went to India [as an apprentice tea planter in 1894] determined to make his fortune. He started on a Tea plantation in Assam eventually becoming manager. He went to the Boer War (1898-1900) in a cavalry regiment and was wounded in his right foot. He walked with a limp and a stick but it did not stop him trekking the Scottish Hills fishing the Hill Lochs. I assume he became friendly with Uncle Alex Macfarlane and on one of his holidays home went to Gigha and met Aunt Annie and they married.

Uncle Jim did not drink or smoke and though he played polo did not socialize much in the Club. Saving his money by 1924 he was able to retire with £33,000 in the bank (in today's money it was over £1,000,000). They bought a house first in Dollar where the two boys were being educated and then about 1927 bought 12 Priestfield Road. This was a three storey semidetached solid building, smallish garden, garage and next to a private tennis court. They lived very comfortably with a living in cook and parlour-maid, my memories of these servants was that they seem to change every 2-3 years – by the start of World War II in 1939 they vanished!

At first glance Uncle Jim appeared very strict and stern and tight with money – but this impression was certainly wrong. He started at the age of 60 to smoke and drink – one cigarette a day (he would stick the end of the cigarette on a pin so he could take 2-3 more draws) and one glass of Beer a month –and he would extol on the benefits of alcohol. He was forever stating “Look after the Pennies and the Pounds will look after themselves.” And he practiced what he preached. Going into the centre of Edinburgh by Tram we walked to the next Tram Stop so that fare was only one penny not two. Capital also he expounded was never to be touched – you lived on the interest. He did dabble quite successfully in the Stock Market increasing both interest and Capital. Loath to give you 2/6 if you asked, he would give people £100 or more if they appeared in need. Certainly beside financing me through 'Varsity he gave me £150 to help me buy my first car. (A new Austin Devon costing £450 in 1948) and then stood guarantor for a loan of £2000 from the Bank to buy the Coach House in 1952. He looked after his money but he was not mean. For instance a friend wrote giving some inside information about a company and advised him to put some money into it. He did and a year later had made a very handsome profit. A little later he heard that his friend had

died and wrote to the widow mentioning the profit he had made and hoped his friend had been equally successful. No said the widow they did not have any money to put into the company. Uncle Jim immediately sent her all the profit he had made on that transaction.

One of Uncle Jim's main hobbies was fly fishing for brown trout. Whilst he had odd days fishing on Loch Leven and some reservoirs round Edinburgh he always rented a house in the Highlands for the months of July and August. They took a maid with them and the house was always filled with guests staying a week or two at a time. In the early 1930s Donald and I were there, in the late thirties, Sheila and I. Uncle Robert was always there, Andrew came up for his 2 weeks annual Holiday often bringing a friend - Colonel Morrison a retired Indian Medical Officer came - he researched into Bacteriophage (organism which eat Bacteria). This went out of fashion with onset of antibiotics but may now be coming back.'

I suspect the house he rented was near Morar, where there is a photograph of my father and Alan and their father. There is also a nice photo of my father with a trout rod from around this period. [see photos]'

Finally there was great-uncle Robert, born on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1870 in Killean and died in 1957 in Ferntosh Manse, Black Isle. My uncle Alan gives a good account of someone whom my father knew quite well and who may have been one of the sources of the dreams expressed in later letters of my father of abandoning tea planting and starting a new life in Canada - which never occurred.

'I never learnt whether Uncle Robert was somewhat simple from birth or it was the result of an accident in Canada. In the 1890s at the age of 22 or so he went out to Midwest Canada to farm. There he fell off a roof fracturing both arms and presumably had a head injury. After recovering he returned to Scotland to live in the Manse at Gigha and never did another day's work in his life till he died well over 80 at Ferntosh Manse on the Black Isle... Perhaps he was not so simple after all. In spite of his clumsiness and sloppy table manners he was to children especially a delightful person - a child at heart he was full of stories and could play many instruments - penny whistle, bagpipes, fiddle, piano etc. As a child in the 1930s I was very fond of Uncle Robert. When the Rev. Uncle Donald died he and Aunt Jessie went to live in a farm called Drummond Reach in the Black Isle [an early nineteenth century farm house, which still exists] where Donald and I used to spend our Easter Holidays from Dollar.'

The youngest son was my grand-father, Archibald Kennedy Macfarlane who was born 3 July 1876 in Killean and died in 1952. I spent at least three holidays, one in Dorset and two in Scotland with him and my grand-mother Florence, so remember them both. My father's life was clearly very strongly determined by them, and particularly by my grand-father's occupation.

Archie may have been apprenticed and trained as an engineer, for the most likely reference in the 1891 Census is to an Archibald K. Macfarlane in Kelvin, Glasgow. It is not clear when he left for America, but it was probably around the turn of the century. So far I have only discovered mention of his whereabouts in three passenger lists, the first of which I shall quote.

New York Passenger Lists List of alien passengers 12 Sep 1914 S.S. "Cameronia" from Glasgow includes Archibald K. Macfarlane, 38, male, single, mining engineer, can read and write, Scotch, last permanent residence Mexico, Parral, nearest relative brother Rev Donald Macfarlane, Gigha Argyleshire, final destination Mexico.

His character and career is described in some detail in my Uncle's reminiscences. This also gives a strong idea of the kind of world which my father inhabited for his first twelve years, before he returned at the age of twelve to Scotland and Boarding School.

'I did not really know my father as we were separated by his mining activities, but he seemed a kind and loving father but short tempered when it came to noise made by small children (and we three were probably noisy!). Son of the Manse at Killean he was the youngest of 8 children.

As a young man he went gold prospecting in Alaska – no gold was found but it is said that a small tributary of the Yukon is named after him as he was the first to canoe down it bringing his partner with Acute appendicitis to safety.

Apart from a spell in the waste lands of Nevada the rest of my father's career was spent in gold and silver mines in Mexico. I can vaguely remember staying in towns like Durango, Parral and Chihuahua to be near the isolated mines.

In 1915 my father and his partner married the Bennie Sisters – Florence and Dorothy (my Auntie Dot). In 1919 (approximately) my father, mother with two babies (Donald and I) were at a mine some distance from Parral (Mexico). News came that Pancho Villa a rebel leader and his army were on the rampage in the vicinity. My father thought it would be best to make for the safety of Parral in a car, but on the outskirts was captured by the Rebel Army and taken to Pancho Villa. Fortunately Pancho was in a good mood and was enamoured by the two white babies and gave a signed pass to my father granting him safe conduct anywhere in Mexico. This document must still be in the custody of the family.

I do remember one mine we were at miles from civilisation when I was about 6 or 7. As children we used to watch the cattle being slaughtered by having their throats cut and cups used to collect & to catch the blood and drunk on the spot. Later the intestines were cleaned and fried like bacon till crisp and eaten. As children we tried this several times and enjoyed it.

My mother kept chickens in the yard and now and again a chicken would appear for supper. At which point we three children would rush out to the yard and find that Emma the oldest chicken had disappeared and we would refuse to eat her, much to my mother's annoyance. We used to ride donkeys bare back without reins and as they only would walk sedately it was quite safe. However one day a thunderstorm struck and the donkeys bolted. I can remember hanging on desperately as the donkey raced for home along a narrow path with a precipice on one side and across a wooden bridge with no support on either side.

On one occasion Donald and I took one of my father's cigars to smoke (the Mexican children had previously given us their home made tobacco to try). Mother smelt the smoke and we were beaten. Later we smoked another cigar but to disguise the smoke we ate tar which had been melted in the heat. Mother wondering why our teeth were stained with tar deduced that we had been smoking and were beaten again it did not stop us smoking.

Between approx 1926-1936 my father was manager of a very isolated gold and silver mine called Quadiloupe [Guadalupe] -Y - Calvo owned by a British firm based in Glasgow. It took 5-7 days by horseback to reach it from the nearest Mexican town. The Gold and silver was taken out by mule train heavily guarded against bandits. Mother and Sheila were there most of the time and loved it, but I never went there. In the early thirties an airfield was built and thereafter the gold etc and passengers could fly in and out in a matter of hours. There was a British pilot but the Mexican Government passed a Law stating that all internal flights had to have a Mexican pilot. The snag, my father used to say that no Mexican would fly in a plane piloted by a Mexican! Thereafter two pilots were employed one Mexican, one British.



The first Mexican pilot arrived dressed like a Wild West cowboy complete with gun belt, revolver and spurs. There had been a recent murder in the village and the pilot as the senior Mexican official present said he would investigate – he was never seen again.

In 1936 my father, mother and Sheila came home on holiday, leaving the mine in charge of his brother-in-law and long time friend and partner Will Harrison. My father reported to the firm's office in Glasgow and advised them to close the mine as it was exhausted and because of a major geological vault it was unlikely that the vein of gold could be found. However at the same time the firm received a cable from Will Harrison (my Uncle) stating that a rich seam had been found. In spite of my father stating that it was highly unlikely and he did not believe it – he was sacked and Will Harrison appointed in his place. A month or two later Harrison himself was sacked when his cable proved false. It did however create a rift between the two families – two sisters who married two partners, Macfarlane and Harrison. I never heard my father mention Will Harrison again.

Thereafter my father tried several ventures, such as making rubber-like-substance from cacti and drilling for oil in Texas, but basically he was out of luck. I am a bit hazy what happened after the war broke out, but they spent a time in the Bahamas where my mother worked for the Red Cross and met the Duchess of Windsor. The main reason for going to the Bahamas was to look after her mother. The Bennies had retired to England in the late 20's living in a Boarding House in Eastbourne and then in the Regent Palace Hotel off Piccadilly Square. (I spent 10 days with them when I was 16).

Grandfather Benny died at the beginning of the War and Grandmother went to the Bahamas to escape the bombing – she could not go to the States where they had spent most of their lives as she could not take her money to the U.S.A. Grandmother died towards the end of the war leaving Mother about £3000 – and this is all my parents had when they retired to this Country in 1947 or 48.

Father had a romantic notion of Scotland from his childhood days. And being in not very good health was sadly disillusioned by the change. However for his last two years he was relatively happy when they became caretakers to a shooting lodge – Corrydon in Glenshee (a lovely spot) – it meant leaving during the shooting season of August & September. In 1951 he fell injuring his hip, I brought him down to Law Hospital where a pathological + of Femur was diagnosed, thereafter he went downhill and died aged 74. Father worked hard in difficult conditions all his life with little financial reward.'

[There are a number of photographs of my grand-father, for example that of 1947 when my parents returned from India with us and obviously went up to Scotland [I think a reference in my grand-mother's diary SEE]. There are also one or two other photographs, in Mexico etc., which can be put in here.]

I had forgotten that they were with us for the Charmouth Christmas in 1947 as well. With my sister Fiona I then spent two holidays with my grandparents at the Coach House, Glenshee, where I caught my first trout. There are one or two photos [SEE]. I do not remember my grandfather at all really, except that he lent me his fishing rods and encouraged me to fish. I think I found him a rather stern and withdrawn figure, which fits with Alan's hint about his view of children. The only other clue I have of his character is in the long letter in 1921 from his brother Donald the Minister.

In all my grand-father must have been an extremely tough, capable, man, but one who did not make the break-through into wealth. A very Scottish prospector life, leaving his children to fend for themselves, though obviously making financial sacrifices for his children. His son, my father Donald, repeated much of this pattern – but in Assam rather than Mexico.

What strikes me most from encountering my grand-father's generation is the extraordinary diaspora they were part of. Brothers went off to Assam, Calcutta, Canada, Mexico. One of the sisters married an Assamese Tea Planter. There is also the strikingly high rate of non-marriage. Only my grand-father seems to have married, his four other brothers (Alex, Donald, John and Robert) did not do so. Likewise, of the three sisters, Jessie also did not marry. It all brings home to me very strongly that Scottish outward movement. One son stayed in the Church, one daughter married a farmer. But impoverished west-coast Scotland really had very little to offer these large families.

Yet when they did go off, if they had children like Uncle Jim and my grand-father, they sent them home to be educated in Scotland, at least from the age of twelve in the case of my father and uncle. Uncle Jim's twin sons were sent home from Assam to Dollar, just as my father and his younger brother were sent home to the same school from Texas.

Of those who stayed at home, the only occupations I have discovered are one doctor and a number of clergymen. There is a strong element of sea and boat-building in several accounts, which ties in with their location. Many members of the family lived in the islands and peninsulas to the west of the Clan homeland of north Loch Lomond. Three particularly eminent divines were on Jura, Gigha and at Killeen.

All this is such a contrast in temperament, career and wealth with my mother's ancestors. When my parents married, and throughout my life, this strong contrast between hearty, games-playing, fishing, clerical, fairly poor Highland Scots, and the imperial James, Jones, Swinhoe, Stirling side – lawyers, soldiers, slave owners etc. came together in my life. A clash of cultures and styles which came to a conclusion in my life and needs to be understood as background for my parents, marriage and my own life.

### **My father Donald**

I have to piece together my father's life from fragments. Unlike my mother, he did not write down memories of his early life, or, if he did, they are lost. But from various sources it is possible to build up some picture of the man who, more than any other, influenced my later life – though in rather indirect ways.

Donald Kennedy Macfarlane was born on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1916 in El Paso, Texas. He spent his first twelve years in Mexico and Texas and came home on the 'Andania', via Montreal, Quebec, arriving in England on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1928, just after his twelfth birthday. He arrived with his mother Florence, obviously leaving his father, younger brother and sister in America.



I shall first give the brief account of his life from my Uncle's reminiscences of him up to the time he left for Assam aged 19 or 20 (his later life will be covered in other volumes). There is, of course, a certain amount about their youth under the accounts of Donald's father and Alan's own life.

*'Donald, my brother - 2 years older than me.*

He was brought to Dollar Academy in 1928 aged 12 and surprisingly was very home sick for nearly a year. I think this affected his whole school life for though intelligent enough he took no interest in school work, so that by 1933 I would have been in the same class as him if he had not left to become an apprentice engineer with John Browns Shipping and Engineering works [on the Clyde]. He was an all round athlete - winning the mile. In the cross country race for what was called the Butchers shield he and a boy called Harvey kept changing places for the lead - however about 200 yds from the finish, without a word spoken to each other, they stopped racing and walked in "first equal". However they were both disqualified for not trying after an almighty row. This also affected Donald so all in all his school days were not happy. On finishing his apprenticeship Uncle Jim used his influence and got Donald a job in Assam Tea Company round about 1936/7.'

It is perhaps worth adding a little more from a video interview I undertook of my uncle and aunt in around 2005, when they were in their later 80's. Pressed as to what Donald was like as a brother, Alan could only say 'He wasn't bad'. 'He was just a brother to me'. Alan could only remember that they had one fight. He wasn't a bully."

Jean was very fond of him - "he was so sweet". "He wouldn't have heart a mouse".

Alan described how Donald was an excellent athlete and could have been a Scottish International rugby player if he had gone to university. As a rugby player he was very obstinate and determined. He confirmed that he had no interest in scholastic matters at all and Alan never saw him doing any work.

Alan told again the story of bullying at Dollar. Donald warned him that there were some bullies in their house and they tried to make you cry. Another boy did cry and

was bullied for a couple of years – but Alan took Donald’s advice and the bullies soon gave up. Donald stopped the bullying when he went up to a senior house. He was well liked as a boy.



Now let me see what else I can elucidate. It is not certain that my father followed the same course as his younger brother, but if he did so he would have been sent away to school from the remote Mexican mines where his mother and father lived around the age of five or six, studying at the Crockett (Davy) Elementary School, a very large school which still survives today, and staying with his mother’s sister and her husband, Auntie Dorothy (Dot). According to Alan, the education there was not of a standard, at least in history and vocabulary, to prepare them fully for the transition to a Scottish boarding school. This, together with a strong American accent, meant that when my father went to School in Scotland he had a far greater disadvantage in entering the Spartan system than I did when, coming from a very good preparatory school, I went to Sedbergh. It is not difficult to understand why, combined with the diet, climate, culture and missing his parents and siblings, she should, like my mother in her account, have been so desperately homesick and unhappy – something which shaped my life in later years.

Dollar school was founded in 1818. Two features strike me from a first glance at the school’s history. The first is that it was very similar to my own boarding school of Sedbergh in laying a very high stress on physical ability. Set on the edge of the mountains, it encouraged sports and games, in particular cross-country running and rugby football. Both require huge determination, some courage, physical strength. My father turned out, fortunately for him, to be very good at both. This may have counter-balanced his disinterest in academic things. It clearly shaped his life to go to such a school and his enthusiasm for games would later influence my life greatly as I tried to emulate his high example and through myself with unfailing zest into sports and games at the Dragon and later.

The second intriguing feature is that the school catered for the fact that the Scots of the later nineteenth and early twentieth century were a huge international diaspora. We have seen in the previous chapter that my parent's father's generation were spread across Assam (two), Calcutta, Canada and Mexico. Many families were like this and because it was the central tradition to send the children home to be educated in their Scottish culture and traditions, there was a demand for boarding schools to do this. I expect that I would find the same patterns in the other famous Scottish boarding schools, Lorretto, Gordonstoun, Fettes and others. The hard physical training was all part of this – preparing the returnees for the possible outward return later in their lives (as happened with my father), to remote parts of the Empire where stamina and games ability would be an important ingredient of their lives.

As an indication of this imperial training mission, it is salutary that the school rugby photographs give the names of all the boys in the top three Xvs and in brackets their place of births. I have not seen this elsewhere, and it was certainly not done for the Dragon or Sedbergh. If we examine the photograph taken in my father's first year at Dollar, when he was in the third XV aged about 12-13, the birthplaces of the boys was as follows:

Scotland: 21  
 England: 7  
 Ireland: 1  
 Chile: 2  
 Argentina: 1  
 China: 2  
 India: 2  
 Mexico: 1

Thus, although obviously Scotland dominated, there were eight boys, about one sixth, from outside the United Kingdom. The situation was even more interesting in the final photograph of the series, in 1933-4, when the boys included some born in Uruguay, India (4) Java, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico (2), China (3), Malay States, Ceylon, thus one third of the boys were born outside the United Kingdom. So my father, though no doubt teased, and given the nickname 'Texas', was at least one of a number of boys who had, no doubt, been sent back from distant countries.

The third interesting feature is the co-educational nature of the school. From its start in 1818 Dollar was a co-educational boarding and day school – the oldest to take both boys and girls in the United Kingdom. I find this interesting since I had somehow thought that comments made by both my parents about my father's shyness when he courted my mother arose from having been educated in single-sex schools. Having myself gone to a single-sex boarding school and seen its effects (mitigated by my sisters), I empathized with this. But I now see that in fact my father clearly enjoyed the company of girls from an early age.

One intriguing piece of evidence that he was friendly with girls is shown by his surviving autograph album from Dollar. One of the four sets of team autographs is of the 1<sup>st</sup> Hockey Eleven 1932-3, with the signatures of over a dozen girls. Two of the five rather detailed paintings in the book are respectively by "Julia" and "Sally". These could be boy's nicknames, of course, for among the thirty or so nicknames my father collected were "Sally", "Jonet", "Jenny Wren" Patsy" and "Sugar", who could be boys or girls. There are two pages of signatures, comprising about one hundred signatures in all. Amongst them are those of my father and J. Macfarlane (presumably his brother).



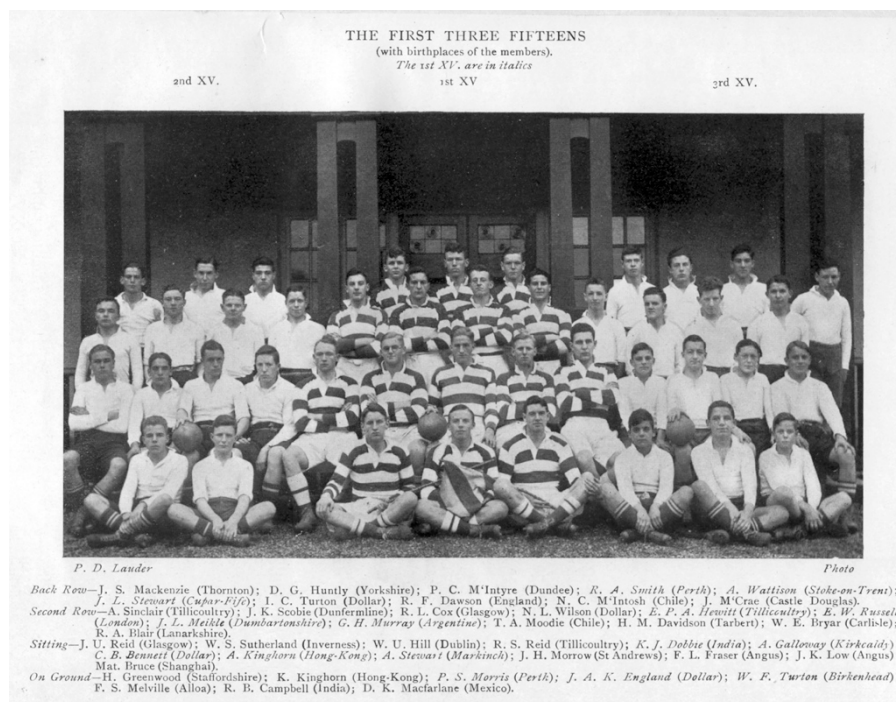
There are also: Isabella Reid, Norah L. Grosart, Sylvia McGunghtherd, Mary McL. Galloway, Stella Mackenzie, Gladys Wilson, Jean Trew, Betty B. Gray, Harmony Blacklaine, Betty W. Stewart, Ethel L Mackenzie. Thus at least one tenth are girls.

Another shock for me is what the photos reveal (and there may be more) about my father's physical development. Because he ended up well over six foot, I had imagined that his tough physical background in Mexico meant that he at least came to the school tall and tough. My father arrived home at the end of 1928. I do not know if he went straight to the school in 1929, but he probably did, entering in the second term, always a bad time since other new boys are already settled in.

His first full rugby season would be in 1929-30, so the first photograph, of the team in 1930-1 was in his second full year, when he was about fourteen. It may have been unusual for a second year boy to get into the team, reflecting his ability and determination, but the fact that he is still so small (he is the smallest boy in the photograph), suggests that he had not put on much weight and height during those first two, reputedly, miserable years.

The other shock is how much like me he looked at that stage.

In the absence of other proof, the size of an individual may give some indication of their psychological condition. The fact that I have four consecutive photographs of my father as he moved up through the rugby teams seems to indicate that from then onwards my father was putting on weight, and by the time he was 16/17 was almost as tall as I remember him.



1930 - Donald - bottom right

*The 1st XV, are in italics.*

2nd XV.



P. D. Lauder

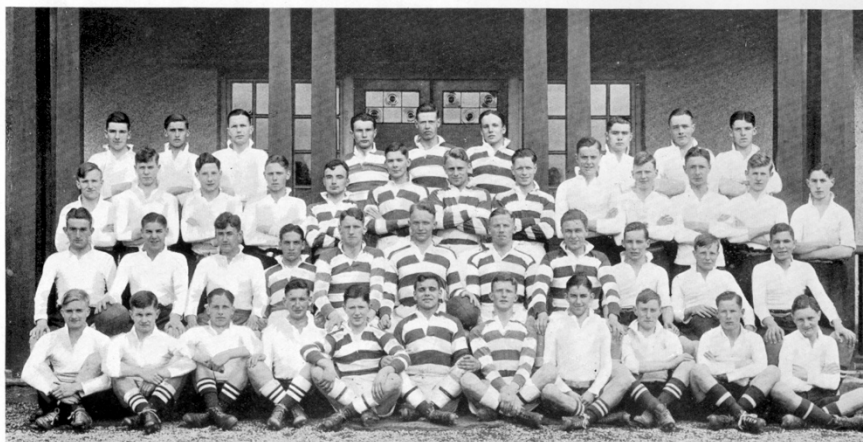
Photo

*Back Row*—J. M. Lauder (Cape Town); M. R. 'Mac' Craie (Douglas); E. P. W. Hutton (Perth); J. A. Brown (Dollard); D. C. Fitzpatrick (London); D. C. Huntly (Yorkshire);  
W. C. M. 'Lutosh' (Chile); R. Leslie (Calcutta); G. R. Ormiston (Bridge of Allan); W. N. T. Stewart (Ullapool); A. Brattasin (Covenden);  
*Second Row*—K. Macdonald (London); R. K. B. Campbell (London); N. B. Bruce (Sharncliffe); N. R. G. MacPhail (Glenorchy); D. A. B. Don (Wallsaye);  
P. C. Macneary (Dundee); M. D. C. Wilson (Dollard); J. L. Melkie (Dunbar); R. G. Macneary (Dollard); T. M. Gray (Allah); J. R. Allen (India); J. W. Heron  
(Singapore); J. E. Bell (Steps); J. Boyd (Scotlandwell).  
*Sitting*—I. C. Turton (Dollard); J. J. H. Morrow (St Andrews); T. A. Moodie (Chile); G. H. Murray (Argentina); P. S. Morris (Perth); K. J. Dobbie (India);  
J. A. K. England (Dollard); J. T. Reid (Glasgow).  
*On Ground*—J. W. Angus (London); J. M. Marshall (Glasgow); R. S. Reid (Tillicumouth); C. W. Sutherland (Inverness); F. L. Fraser (Angus); K. Kinghorn  
(Hong-Kong); F. S. Melville (Allah); R. D. Duff (Calcutta); H. M. McDonald (Heywood); V. G. Savi (Malay States).

1931 - Donald - second row, left end

*The 1st XV. are in italics.*

ard XV



*Whitehead, Alva*

Photo

*Back Row*—H. McIlwraith (Dollar); J. Brown (Dollar); R. Leslie (India); E. Hutton (Perth); I. Turton (Dollar); L. Craig (Edinburgh); A. Brattesani (Cowlesdale); C. Palfrey (Alva); D. Niven (Whithorn).  
*Second Row*—J. Matheson (Glasgow); M. C. Macfarlane (Dunfermline); D. Duncan (Perth); J. Bell (Steepe); A. Sinclair (Tillicoultry); D. Fitzpatrick (London); M. Bruce (Shanghai); J. Wilson (Dollar); D. MacKay (Alloa); I. Spence (Javel); I. Miller (Carnoustie); W. Taylor (Dundee); H. Duff (India).  
*Sitting*—J. Jardine (Deal); C. Turner (Glasgow); E. Allsopp (Dollar); W. Sutherland (Inverness); P. Morris (Perth); K. Dobbie (India); J. England (Dollar); J. Reid (Glasgow); W. Harvey (India); N. Macdonald (Ceylon); D. Campbell (India).  
*On Ground*—F. Harding (S. America); W. Kirkwood (Prestwick); R. Carnegie (Stornoway); J. Heron (Singapore); R. Kinghorn (Hong-Kong); F. McNeill (Aloha); K. Kinghorn (Hong-Kong); R. McGaw (Bladnoch); J. Norwell (Perth); H. Ross (Lochgilbligh); J. Taylor (India).

1932 - Donald second row, second from left

# THE FIRST THREE FIFTEENS

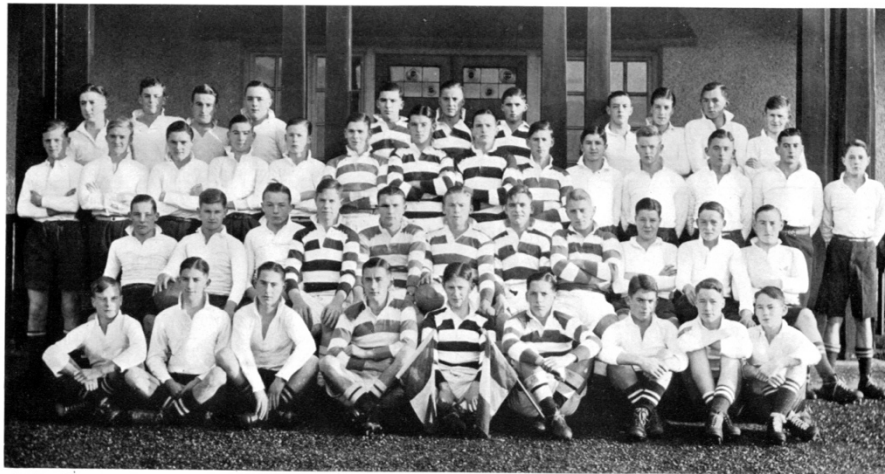
(with birthplaces of the members),

*The 1st XV are in italics.*

2nd XV.

1st XV.

3rd XV.



A. Drysdale

Photo

*Back Row*—I. Miller (Carnoustie); C. M'Intosh (Uruguay); J. Jardine (Kent); C. Palfrey (Alva); H. M'Ilwraith (Dollar); D. Harley (Alloa); J. Brown (Dollar); L. Fox (India); A. M'Phail (Argyllshire); W. Harley (Alloa); W. Taylor (Dundee).  
*Second Row*—J. Spence (Java); F. Harding (Argentina); J. Taylor (India); J. Gonnella (Dollar); H. Ross (Lochgilphcad); D. Fitzpatrick (London); D. Niven (Wigtownshire); R. Leslie (India); J. Heron (Singapore); D. Brownlee (Roxburgh); D. Graham (Dollar); P. Thomson (Kent); H. Mackenzie (Fife); J. Anderson (Brazil).  
*Seated*—W. Harvey (India); W. Kirkwood (Ayrshire); H. Ballingall (Edinburgh); D. Macfarlane (Mexico); E. Hutton (Perth); J. England (Dollar); F. McNeill (Alloa); H. Bruce (Shanghai); A. Crockett (Arran); J. Mackie (Malay States); J. Norwell (Perth).  
*On Ground*—N. Macdonald (Ceylon); R. M'Gaw (Wigtownshire); H. Duff (India); E. Alliepp (Dollar); R. Kinghorn (Hong-Kong); R. Carnegie (Stornoway); J. Parker (Bradford); I. Robertson (China); A. Macfarlane (Mexico).

1933 - Donald, fourth from left in third row (in 1<sup>st</sup> XV colours)

THE PHOTO AT MORAR - this shows Sheila, Alan, Archie and Donald, towards the end of their time at Dollar, dressed in school uniform, thus c. 1934. My father is about 17 or 18. My father appears to have a very elaborate blazer with a crest on it - school prefect or first fifteen?



So it is clear that my father put on weight and height and was about as tall as his father when he left the school, and quite broad. This gave him an obvious advantage both in rugby and in the other sport at which he was outstanding, running.

As we have seen he was a very fast runner, winning the mile race in his last year. He was also a good cross-country runner over the rugged terrain, which requires, as I know, great stamina, long training and natural ability, and at which I dismally failed. But my

father was clearly very good. In his penultimate year, aged 15-16, the Dollar Magazine (pp.101-3) gives an account of his ability in the Butchart Shield race run on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March and extending over a five mile course. The leader, Reid won comfortably in 30 mins. 52 seconds, with Macfarlane second and Harvey third. He must therefore have been the favourite for the following year.

I have just heard from the School Archivist that there is only a very brief account in the School magazine of this year's race – confirming the fact that the authorities were angry at what had happened and did not want it made known. The following year, as described elsewhere, he felt himself unfairly disgraced for coming in equal first with another boy.

My uncle Alan ascribes my father's failure to succeed academically not to his talent, but rather to the fact that he hardly tried at school. It is clear from Alan's account that the two boys came with a heavy academic disadvantage, little knowledge of English history, bad spelling etc. and that Alan only overcame this by working twice as hard as others, which he could do because he was relatively happy (partly with an older brother to advise and protect him). But my father seems to have despaired and given up academic work. It is clear, as Alan says, that he was an intelligent man who later became a very proficient engineer. Yet he remained intellectually insecure, especially in comparison to his younger brother (and sister) who both went to university. This insecurity was no doubt exacerbated by marrying a naturally highly intelligent and intellectually ambitious wife, Iris, and having two children who went to University and taught in Universities. This academic capitulation would affect all our lives. I never found it difficult to talk to him, or found him in the slightest bit anti-intellectual or dismissive of intellectual things. But as I grew more engrossed in things of the mind, rather than my earlier enthusiasm for sport and fishing, we found less to talk about and share.

I have quoted my uncle's account of my father's rugby and running and his great potential. He was later to put energy into rugby, polo and other sports in India and we always had a bond through games. I suspect that much of my intense concentration on games and reckless daring in rugger came out of a desire to please him – alongside a recognition that sporting prowess gave one status.

My uncle implies that because he was so disinterested in academic matters and clearly not going to take his Highers, he left Dollar early. In fact he is in the rugby photograph of 1933-4 when he would be eighteen. So he appears to have stayed on, but not long enough to take his Highers. (The Archivist tells me that a number of boys from overseas stayed on an extra year or two because they were well behind in class).

Certainly there seems to have been no question of going to University and no discernible sign of a move into the Church, to follow his uncle and grandfather Donald. In fact I don't remember my father ever showing much interest in organized religion.

Donald's father was a mining engineer and it may have been this, alongside Uncle Jim's knowledge that engineers were in demand on Indian tea plantations, which led to my father becoming an apprentice at the famous Glasgow engineering firm of John Brown on the Clyde. I may find something more about that period, which perhaps lasted a couple of years, when my father was aged 18-20. At present all I know is something he told me, and which is confirmed by Uncle Alan's memoirs, which is that my father helped to design (and build?) the wave-making machinery for the Portobello Baths in Edinburgh.

As yet I am also not certain when he left for Assam (are there any shipping records – it must have been about 1936), but he is listed as a member of the Assam Tea Company (Antrobus) as present from 1936. He went as an engineer, or assistant



manager, to the Assam Tea Company where his uncle Jim had spent many years, latterly as manager of Towkok estate, next to which my father was later to be a Manager (at Tingelibam). Although it was not the same company, he may also have been influenced by the fact that his father's older brother Alex had also been fifty years in tea in Assam.

As yet, I know nothing about his time in Assam between his arrival aged about twenty in 1936 and when he met my mother in October 1939. I hope to find a few facts in due course.



Mac in polo team 1938 or 1939 (far left)





Mac in Naziara Club polo team in 1939 (far right)



Left - Mac in 194/2 around the time he met Iris  
Right - Mac at Bareilly in 1940, shortly after he met Iris

## 8 MEETING TO WEDDING - 5 October to March 1940

### Because of You

Because I walked a lonely path apart,  
Serene, content & glad to be alone.  
Because you crossed that path & used my heart.  
To bear your foot, my love as stepping stone,  
Because the days were long & I was young  
And clouds rode high & skies were gently blue  
Because of all these things, but most of all  
Because of You

Because the stars were shining all for me  
And waves & winds flaunted my joy & pain  
Because I looked into Eternity  
And dreamt, & did not fear to wake again.  
Because the rain was kind nor did it stir  
That old persistent aching that I knew  
Before we met: but more than all these things  
Because of You

Because we leant over a gate & sighed  
And saw a butterfly flutter & fall.  
And suddenly I knew your love had died  
And wondered if you ever loved at all  
Because I looked around and saw the sky  
Darken & blindly hunted for some clue  
And felt a mist arise: but most of all  
Because of You

Because you took my dreams into your keeping  
And left me with a thousand useless fears.  
There is no need for heart-ache or for weeping  
You have my heart & with it go my tears.  
And now, because that heart was of your choosing  
I can look up & start my life anew  
For I have learnt to live at last & only  
Because of You

(Iris Macfarlane)

There may be one or two other poems by my mother to add in here.   ADD

My mother wrote two accounts of her meeting with my father. In the original, longer, version of her factual autobiography she wrote:

‘Four months after my eighteenth birthday I wore my black skirt and bolero to one more Boat Club dance and almost fell off my silver heels at the sight of a young man in our party, a brown-faced, golden-haired, blue-eyed Viking hero. I had fallen in love on an average once a month since arriving in India, but this time it was mutual. Unbelievably none of my drawbacks mattered: my leg, my non-flaring nostrils, my cleverness. My mother was equally astounded and lost no time in setting a date for the wedding.

But I had the same reservations and qualms as my mother had had. I wanted to marry; I hardly dared expect to be given another such chance; I was "in love" as who could help but be with such a man; I wanted very much to get away from home; but what about all the rest? What about university, and a career? Marriage would shut the door forever on all other relationships with men, so was this particular man going to satisfy me completely till the end of my days? Or me him come to that; I had learnt what adultery meant since my Furzedown days, but precious little else about sex or childbearing. After one of my hesitant days Mac sent me a letter like the one my father had sent my mother, with a kindly-phrased ultimatum: did I or did I not want to marry him, and if not would I please say so firmly and save both of us future trouble. That clinched it, because I couldn't bear to see him walk away.

Other parts are filled in from the unpublished autobiographical novel ‘Going Back’. Although it weaves together fact and fiction, it is clearly largely based on memories overlapping with the above. [Maria is the name she gave herself, ‘Philip’ is clearly my father.]

#### Sunday October 5th.

He had arrived, golden haired, brown cheeked, blue eyed and taken her restless body and mind straight into his keeping. He wasn't only the best looking man she had ever met, he was also the most sensitive and understanding. He read and wrote poetry, watched birds, had dreams like her own of changing the world. They went for picnics in the pine woods above the lake – it was like a tiny glittering pond way down below their eyrie – and planned the perfect life they would achieve.

They talked and talked about their childhoods. She told him about the awful aunts, and the CSSM [Church Mission] and the sex maniacal dog and he said he too had sat on beaches and sang choruses and they chanted “Throw out the life line, someone is drifting away-hay” and turned to laugh into one another's faces, and kissed instead. His shoulder had been shaped for her head, she would have liked to stay forever with his lips on her hair, the tiny lake a drop of mercury miles and miles below.

They would be married of course. After the war they would live somewhere where they could keep their children with them, that would be the first priority. No awful aunts for their family.

They planned in detail the house they would have, its front door led up to from the garden gate, their bedroom under the eaves, her study for writing, his workshop, the children's nursery. There would be apple trees and a stream, she would write books when the children grew older, and bake bread. The money to pay for this idyll would come from some still unidentified job but it would be something "worthwhile", perhaps to do with a nature reserve. When they led their ponies down through the forest and back amongst houses and people, they felt as if it was after years of living in their orchard cottage.

Maria's mother wasn't too happy about these outings alone with a man, but was reconciled by the fact that Philip was so handsome and eligible, and his wooing was leading her daughter to a definite altar. The daughter of whom she had so often

despaired had finally turned up trumps and landed a young man of dazzling charm and a promising future. Maria and her mother planned together, for the first time at one in their aspirations. Her father basked contentedly in the warm and friendly atmosphere. For the first time Maria was able to talk to him. Philip had acted as a catalyst on the whole family.

These are two accounts as my mother looked back from many decades later. What do the contemporary documents show?

The only evidence external to Mac and Iris are a very few diary entries by my grandmother.

12.12 Iris' engagement; our drink party

[12.12 Iris too X – period: 'too' may refer to the fact that Violet also notes her periods throughout the year at the back of the diary, the last of which was on 12.12]

14.12 Cynthia's wedding

16.12 Eileens party

19.12 Kinks left

21.12 Club party

The 'Baby's Biography' notes:

Engaged at Bareilly India on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of December 1940.

Insert the engagement announcement in the paper as it appeared. PICTURE

#### Forthcoming Marriages:

The engagement is announced between Donald Kenneth Macfarlane, Bombay Grenadiers, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs Kenneth Macfarlane, of Morven, Argyllshire, and Iris Stirling, only daughter of Lt.-Colonel W. Rhodes James, M.C., Indian Army, and Mrs Rhodes James, Bareilly.

Otherwise, the inside of this process can be traced through diaries and letters of my parents. I feel a certain hesitation in quoting these very intimate accounts of the turbulence in my mother's heart in the six months between meeting my father and their marriage. Yet I think that she would understand that for the later story of all our lives they are an important key. They show her idealism, her insecurity, her romantic intensity and her dreams of what the marriage should be like. They are contained in the last of several diaries she kept from arriving in India and which break off after December 20<sup>th</sup>.

\*

I have found no indication of my father's four years in Assam from the time he joined the Assam Tea Company in October (check) 1936, then joined the 4th Bombay Grenadiers at the start of the war. He had been in India for at least four years when he met my mother, but his career and personal development during that time are as yet undocumented.

All that is clear is that by October 1940 he was part of the 10th (Training) Battalion, which was amalgamated from the Jat Regiment to form part of a Combined Training Centre at Bareilly. It was from there that he made a fateful visit to Naini Tal in early October 1940, where he met my mother.

My mother had been in Naini Tal for some months with her mother and surrounded by friends. Her whirling social life and numerous minor affairs are recounted in detail in the previous account of her childhood and life until she met my father



Iris in the gown she was wearing when she met my father on October 5th

\*

There are two sources for the period between the meeting and wedding. One is the diary which my mother kept intermittently during the period until December 20th. The other are a few letters from my father. Their brief courtship was intense and the account is unusually revealing. So I shall include all of both these sources, though I may prune later if needed.

My mother's account reproduced here starts from the day they met.



*Sunday October 5<sup>th</sup>*

The angels are singing again and the stars are bright and there's a new Moon. The cause of this is a strong silent man from the frontier, who entered my life yesterday. Bosun [James Bason, killed in Singapore] brought him up for the night and we dined and had a party and danced at the Chalet afterwards. His name is Donald Macfarlane - young and brown with dusty fair hair and very silent and sweet. He laughs easily and draws well and dances adorably. That's all I know about him so far, but he did like me, in spite of P. Moss being there and he was so boyish and keen. He took me home and that hill has never seemed so short with my arm through his and the sky bursting with stars. It was a lovely evening altogether as everyone was nice to me, including Bosun.

*Monday October 6<sup>th</sup>*

Felt lousy after yesterday - this diary seems to have got one day behind. Yesterday we took breakfast up Cheena, had a huge lunch with General Macrae at the Boat House, slept there on sofas and then went to a flick. Breakfast was rather a dream - the snows crystal clear. Susan Marshall came too and I've taken a great fancy to her. I hope she likes me. We only got back just in time and M and D were both very late for the lunch. M was guest of honour too! I sat between John Henry and Richardson - it wasn't bad. Felt too sleepy to think afterwards so put off tennis and ??? and P.Moss came to tea. We're a very happy little group - I'm awfully happy. The flick was mediocre. To-day I've got a hea - - [unfinished]

*Friday October 18<sup>th</sup>*

Posterity will be deprived of that last interesting sentence and of several weeks in between since it was written. A pity I can't be more consistent in writing this but there is an awful lot of waste days lying about. There "are" I think I should say but no matter. Since I last wrote this nothing of any importance has happened. I haven't been feeling well on and off, and I've been spending most of my time doing shorthand. Perhaps I'll pass but its going to be touch and go. Pat and I rode to Bowali for breakfast the other day, and spent a long lovely day lying in the sun eating chocolate and talking airily about life. Such days are precious and rare, but they do come and leave a fragrance behind. Sometimes, at these times, one reaches the "cloud-capped towers" and roams round the "gorgeous palaces" and the memory of it is sweet and lasting. I've seen the film "Rebecca" and simply adored it - it is almost but not quite as good as the book. Laurence Olivier as Maxim with pale grey hair was devastating and made me long, as so often before for a man older than me and terribly terribly understanding. Yesterday morning John Gielgud gave a talk which was very thrilling - all about his theatre work in war-time and bunging in bits out of speeches. It took me back more than anything else has done and started the old flow of feeling!

Bother, I'm working myself up into a temper and I don't want to. Its so seldom now that we have those miserable rows in the family that used to tear the heart out of me, but just now, in the last 5 minutes, Mummy has been getting on my nerves and I feel blood-thirsty. I expect she reads this diary regularly and I hope this pleases her. I am a foul character I really am, its being borne in upon me more and more and I really cant see how people even put up with me, let alone like me. I sulk and grumble and mope all day and get hurt and uppish so easily and above all I'm supremely selfish. Nothing matters except my happiness - that's true.

This bilge is all written to use a new and fascinating pen.

*Monday 21<sup>st</sup> October*

The desolation has crept in on me again and flooded out everything but an endless misery. This black and bottomless pit is becoming quite familiar. I don't know what caused it except weariness and liver but I cried with throat-aching tears and am just beginning to recover. If only, for one blessed moment, I could be real and utterly myself instead of acting a continual part and getting outside myself as an interested spectator. I wonder if I've got any real feelings or beliefs – even in these tormenting moods I see myself as being “unusual” artistic temperament etc. I'm beginning to wonder if I shall be able to love whole heartedly – what does it matter anyhow.

*Monday 28<sup>th</sup>*

Just a week – who knows how the world can open up in a week to shower riches on a bent head? Terribly dramatic, but that's how I feel. We came down here on Saturday – thoroughly hot and difficult day altogether. We all squashed up in a lorry in hot, sore-throated huddle and didn't arrive till about 5. The bungalow is a palatial place with a separate sitting room for me – rather heaven. The world lit up by getting a note from Pat asking me to go to a picnic to-morrow evening with Donald Macfarlane etc. he's still rather dear though its difficult to really remember every little thing.

*Sunday.*

Bailey's came round in the morning and Joan Davis who said on entering “You don't think these dogs will nip me in the bud, do you?” !! Apparently Donald M. hasn't got off with P.Moss or anyone and is fairly faithful. I slept disjointedly in the afternoon and during tea Yvonne turned up and seemed a bit disgruntled with life in general. However I had to go off to the picnic and left her standing. From then on it was pure bliss, unalloyed and perfect. I had looked forward to it so much that I thought I was bound to be disappointed – but it was lovely beyond belief. We went off in two Cars – Bosun and Pat in one, Macfarlane, P.Moss and a rather sweet little man called Bottle. Polly insisted on sitting in front with Mac but I didn't mind because I felt he was more mine than anyone's. We settled down by the river, lying in front of the fire and listening to the gramophones, the stars flickering out one by one. It was lovely. Then we had dinner and afterwards we lay on our tummies and the night with its glamour closed in and flowed through us. Mac put his arm round me and I lay with my head on his shoulder and he kissed me – “Enough for Enchantment” – too much I fear. It was so beautiful, apart from anything I've felt before – different and sweet.

*Monday 28<sup>th</sup>*

Rather a disappointing day. Pat spent most of the day with me. We talked a lot about Mac which has filled me with a longing for him. We saw him too, and I was suddenly overcome and was rather rude and abrupt. But he was shy too and I now feel rather miserable, afraid that I may have spoilt everything. Oh damn – God, don't let me spoil everything now please. I'm falling, I feel – Oh I don't want to – and yet - - - Its so silly to fall at the slightest encouragement with heart-break to follow. But I liked his kisses and I

felt so utterly contented and peaceful with him last night. Was it only enchantment, or the drawing aside of the veil?

*Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup>*

Another empty day of waiting and wanting. Pat and I went for a ride early in the morning – it was rather fun, only I was a bit nervous at first because they bolted with us across the maidan and I was sure I was going to fall off. However I didn't and it was rather fun, specially the healthy hearty feeling I had after. Went to breakfast with Baileys and Pat and read poetry for an hour before going shopping. In the afternoon Pat, Polly and I went to play tennis with Yvonne who never turned up, so we played with Bill Berridge and I loved it. Very hot and rather dark. Afterwards sat in the Club for hours, and he was there and I felt unhappy and happy and generally in a turmoil.

*Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup>*

The waiting and wanting a little bit fulfilled. I can't believe its true that this things happening to me – perhaps it isn't. "This strange love, full of dread, beyond recall" – is it going to sweep over My land and sea? And do I want it to? Oh it's a hideous problem but a rather lovely one. In the evening we went to the cocktail Dance and "he" was there and danced a lot with me. Bosun says he's in love with me, which upset me – I don't know if it's true – but it was wrong of him to tell me anyhow, because it isn't fair on Mac. I wish there didn't always come a time when one had to choose – and hurt somebody. I hope it won't come yet for me, perhaps it won't ever. But this is different to anything I've experienced before. Chiefly, I think, because words don't come into it at all – there's an electric current between us, so I know that he's feeling what I'm feeling, sort of radiating those feelings to me. When we talk its all trifling and unimportant – "Words are but the trappings of content." But we have a sort of language I think. I'm not going to think Myself into being in love, that's definite. If its going to come it will, in its own time. And it'll be lovelier for waiting. He drove me home after the dance. And though I made all sorts of resolutions I couldn't keep any of them and I did love his kisses.

*Friday November 1<sup>st</sup>*

Yesterday we went to Budanu for the day. It was hot and sticky but pleasant. Started at 9 and spent an hour on the road-side with Joanie Davis. She is most amusing and really not at all vacant – in fact extremely intelligent and arty and amazingly witty. A very odd character. We had a nice lunch at Budanu with the Nicholson's and sat about afterwards in a hot coma, appalled by the suggestion made by Mrs N. that we would shoot partridges! Got back to the Bailey's for tea and then strolled across the Maidan to our house. Rubbed my feet raw to-day has been pleasantly empty – met Mac this morning which was rather overpowering. Baileys and Bill Berridge came to dinner and it was pleasant.

*Saturday Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup>*

Rode as usual at 7. It's perfectly blissful then, everything wrapped in a smoky warmth and sweetness that soon wears off. Spent the morning, after breakfast with Baileys, messing about reading, writing and cooking things for Mummy. After lunch I slept the

sleep of the dead and after tea went round to see the Macleans and Yvonne. Both she and Eileen are so futile really. Pat's completely spoilt me for anyone else. Mac and Bosun and she came round after dinner and took me to the dance. It was all fun and Bosun particularly was nice. And not at all drunk. He and Pat retired to the car while Mac and I wandered vaguely round the club grounds hand in hand. It was lovely – only something lacking.

*Sunday Nov. 3<sup>d</sup>*

Slept late and at 12 Mac and Bosun came round to fetch me, Eileen and Ivonne. We all went to the club and drank and arranged to go to a flick. Mac looked adorable in a grey shirt. He is so incredibly nice looking – all brown and gold like honey – with a smile that tears the heart out of me. “We all want our ration of flowery passion. But that isn't marriage My Child” – so true! Went to quite funny flick in the evening and trailed back to dinner with Baileys. Bosun was nice again. And Mac very shy. I got out of the car quickly so he couldn't kiss me – don't know why.

*Letter from Mac, dated Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> 1940, from Tenth Battalion*

Dear Tottie,

Many thanks indeed for your chit. Bosun and I should love to come – Only one snag. Bosun has had his marching orders but is not quite certain when he is going. Anyway he will come if he can. I shall be there anyway.

Re the car, really Tottie, you know me better than that. I would drive you there back and there again if you wanted to!! So forget all about that.

I noticed you didn't go chasing paper this morning. Bad little girl. You should have gone. Good fun.

Shall probably see you some time this week and we can arrange about Sunday. If you can come down to the club this evening about 6 pm or before I can always take you back. We could make arrangements.

Yours. Mac

P.S. Played polo yesterday and can hardly walk today.

*Tuesday Nov. 12<sup>th</sup>*

As usual events have rushed ahead and there are no words. The last week or ten days has been beautifully peaceful and yet quite full. I spend long happy messing-about mornings and sleep till tea-time. Then I usually go out to tea or have someone here or go for a walk or something. And nearly always have an early and sleep-filled night. Of course it varies – I see Bosun and Mac quite a lot and they sometimes take me out in the car and I go out to one or two dances. But on the whole it hasn't been hectic at all and I'm glad.

I haven't got much further about Mac. He fills my thoughts and feelings most of [the] day, but is that only wishful thinking? Last week-end he and Bosun and I went out to

shoot with the Nicholson's. It wasn't much of a success really, but lovely for Mac and me in parts. The first evening after dinner we went for a walk along sandy, moon-washed paths with the rushes tall and black on either side. We talked a fair amount and seemed to get a bit nearer, though' words don't come easily to him. I'm glad really - he said more with his kisses and everything in me ran out to meet and greet him. No past, no future - just Now.

*Friday Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>*

Still haven't got any further - except that he's told me he loves me. But I only said "No" feebly and haven't referred to it again. But we can't keep at this stage for long. Yesterday was an important day. We rode in the morning and stayed out quite late. Then he had breakfast here and afterwards came and listened to the gramophone. It was so lovely and peaceful and homely and at the same time there was electricity in the air. If only I could get him to talk a little more about himself and his feelings, then I could decide if our interests were in common. He loves poetry and painting and that's really all I have to go on. On Wednesday we had a party for the Cocktail Dance and I was wildly jealous because he danced twice running with Bubbles. But I don't think he minds much who I dance with. The night before we also had a binge, dinner here and a flick. It is blissful agony sitting on a sofa with him, he holds my hand very tight and - oh well its no good explaining these things "thus hand in hand and toe to toe Reel after reel we sat, You are not old enough to know the ecstasy of that"!! I want to marry him because physically I know we could reach the heights. But that isn't enough and the other side does matter and oh oh *OH* what am I to do?

*Tuesday Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>*

I'm completely exhausted by all the emotional crises and heart-to-heart talks I've been through in the last few days. I enjoy it all but long sometimes to lie for a long time by a stream in England and hear the rooks and feel moss and smell clover. On Saturday I went to a party with the Leonard's which was lovely but involved. All the young Jats were there, and Sidney Peew and Ian Alexander, P.Moss, Gunnings, Dempseys and a few other bits. The Gunnings are a quaint couple, she is very young, rather attractive, but never stops talking for one moment, and most of its repetition. She told me her whole life history during supper. He is large, and bald though only 33 or something. But I liked him, we talked about history etc.

It was Bosun's last night and I felt miserable. He's never been so nice, and completely sober. We sat at the bar and discussed religion and the next world and love and Mac quite a lot. I could really explain the situation fully and not be afraid he'd laugh at me. And then suddenly we started talking about my leg and I wanted to cry and damn nearly did. But he was terribly sweet - he said he didn't know till he was told - and that it didn't matter at all. But how can he, or anyone else, understand that its made me what I am - sensitive to the point of lunacy and moody and sullen. He said Mac wouldn't mind - darling Mac. He is sweet, and when I dance with him everything swims in a lovely happy haze, but is this love? I've drove out in the car and he explained how he felt and asked me to think. Oh darling.

*Letter from Mac to Iris on tenth battalion notepaper, 27<sup>th</sup> November 1940*

My dear,



I meant to ask you yesterday but would you and Susan like to go to the cocktail Dance this evening.

I shall call round any time. By the way would your Mother like to come. Ask her will you please.

All my love

Mac

*Thursday Nov 28<sup>th</sup>.*

Only a week and I feel as if I've gone through a lifetime of experience. I got in a ghastly muddle at the beginning of the week. One night when we were both very worked up Mac and I got unofficially engaged. And then next day I had complete panic and went back on my word again. It isn't that I feel any the less.

There is then a gap in the diary until December 20<sup>th</sup>, but in this period there are the bulk of the remaining letters from Mac.

*Letter from Mac to Iris 29<sup>th</sup> November 1940*

Dearest,

Of course if you feel doubtful about it I'll wait. But dear please tell your mother *today* and let me know because really I am feeling simply awful.

I am glad you meant it all. It is difficult but still I love you too much to wait much longer.

Of course I shall see you tonight. Just say what we shall do and what time you would like me to call for you. ANYTHING.

I can't get off the subject dear of how much I love you, it might seem a "soppy" letter, but I am not accustomed to it. I do. I do. I do.

You must not get panicky. It must turn out right in the end. It can't go on like this for long. Anyway you do love me and we are to ourselves engaged aren't we?

Let me know about this evening.

All my love. "Mac"

*Tenth Battalion. No date c. Nov/December 1940*

My dearest,

I am afraid I simply cannot make the Wedding this morning. My Company Commander is away and just have to stay.

Will you please apologise for me dear. I [am] not writing direct because they will be feeling pretty excited.

Give them my best wishes will you please.

See you later darling,

All my love, Mac

*Tenth Battalion no date c. Nov/December 1940*

P.S. Note sounds cheerful but it isn't really!! I love to say all kinds of things but you must think them all "bunk".

My dear,

Just one of those notes. Haven't seen you for so long. Just want to hear from you.

I am going away tomorrow but shall be back Friday afternoon. I'll miss not seeing you Tothi. Still can't be helped.

Cheero my sweet.

All my love

xx Mac

*Tenth Battalion no date c. Nov/December 1940*

P.P.S. If I don't see you today or this evening can you suggest anything tomorrow.

My dear,

I don't really [know] why I am writing this chit.

First as an excuse I am sorry about the hold ?? counting out on us last night.

Secondly are you going to the dance tonight. I have probably told you I have to go to the Pantons for dinner and on to the dance afterwards.

Will you be there?

I want to see you so much. I haven't talked to you for ages and I have a lot to tell you.

I wish we could have quiet evening together. I am so sick of everything. What really I don't know. I do actually but ----?

If you are at the dance I must have one please. Just think I shall have to dance with LILLO all night. How thrilling???

According to the picture last night I should tear this letter up. It is just my thoughts at the moment. I won't though.

All my love dear, Mac

Really I do.

*Tenth Battalion - no date, Nov/December 1940*

My darling,

Just a small hurried chit to ask you if you would like to go to the dance tomorrow evening. I don't know about transport yet but will let you know.

I just want to say I love you too, more than ever. Really I do. Haven't seen much of you but think of you all the time.

Not very nice to read early in the morning but that is how I feel morning noon and night.

All my love, Mac

P.S. Would Pat like to come as well. I forgot she was here. Don't tell her that.

*Tenth Battalion no date c. Nov/December 1940*

P.S. Let me know if you want anything will you.

My little darling,

I am afraid that I shall not be able to come and see you at 11 o'clock as intended as I have some work I must do. I shall be round this evening and see you my sweet. How are you feeling now? A lot better I hope. Only a few more days and you will be out and kicking.

Funny thing I have just been looking thro' all your letters to me. I have them beside me and when I get lonely I read them, mix them put, and put them back in order again.

Well darling all my love and tons of kisses. See you this afternoon, Mac

*Tenth Battalion - no date ?Nov/December 1940*

My dear,

Really it was awfully nice of you to write.

I shall be Tottie. I will wait as long as you like and remember please, you must promise me, that just because I love you so much, for my sake as well as your own, don't be frightened to decide just the way you think you should.

I believe you when you say you love me and I know how hard it must be for you, but as you say God willing the world will be ours.

I was at the club as you say 'foraging' 'TOMATO JUICES'!!

Well dear girl I hope this does not wake you up or spoil your little dreams.

Again thanks for your letter and you didn't hurt my feelings really. You know I am just a little silly at times and so so greedy!!!

Glad your ???was amiable.

All my love,

'Mac'

P.S. "GABRIEL" sends his love

*From Tenth Battalion, no date - ?Nov/Dec 1940*

My dear,

I don't think tennis will be functioning today as the courts will be unplayable. Sorry about it. Means I can't see you. Oh Tottie can't seem to be able to see you at all these days and honestly I do want to fix things up. The trouble is I suppose that I love you to[o] much and that[s] what makes it seems so rotten. We shall have [to] make arrangements sort of weeks ahead to do anything. I have got one of those horrible "sinking feelings" and could just sit here and write how much and why I love you so much for hours. Must stop thought dearest.

All my love xx Ma

Tenth Battalion. No date. - Nov/Dec 1940 [presumably after December 12th engagement]

My darling,

I don't know really what to write about. I have thousands of things really but I am so happy that I am practically speechless.

I hope you are happy my sweet. Everybody is saying how lucky I am, and I am, you are absolutely terrific darling. Gosh I am happy.

May I come round this evening for a few minutes as I was to see you and I have had a letter from Mapen & Webb saying that it wouldn't be a bad idea to send what size of ring you would like!!! Being in such a flat spin I never thought of it.

Well sweetheart see you later I hope.

All my love darling,  
Mac

*Tenth Battalion. No date. November/December 1940.*

Dearest,

Had to write a chit. Why. I don't know. Perhaps its because I didn't see you all yesterday. You mustn't leave me if I feel that way.

Can't I see you today sometime that is if you can.

I started out this chit because I felt I must have tons of things to tell you now I find myself speechless again.

My Colonel is here just now so have to do a lot of dashing round.

All my love dear, Mac

The engagement was made formal on December 12th. My mother's last diary entry was eight days later.

*December 20<sup>th</sup>*

But perhaps its just as well I didn't go into long explanations of how I felt and why, because everything's alright now, and Mac and I are happily engaged. So happily that I am miserable half the time having to be away from him. It is so wonderful to think that all that beauty of mind and body is mine for as long as I want it - which will be for ever. I mean to make a success of my marriage by using my brains. That sounds rather prosaic and down to earth. But I believe that it needs brains to turn "the earthly gift to an end divine" as well as love and instinct and pure emotion. I want nothing more of life than that Mac should want only me. I'm so terrified of disappointing him - physically, mentally, anyhow. I've never felt so young and insufficient and unworthy as I do now. But I shall grow up and be able to be more worthy of him and give him more to repay for what he has given me - the world. I don't want fame any more or comfort or even England very much. Its horrible at the moment as everyone regards us as a sort of "exhibit" and asks us to parties all the time and we never see each other except to snatch a few hurried blissful moments together. But I suppose it has to be this way and we will have our moments later and our peace. Pat is staying at the moment and I'm afraid hasn't been having too bright a time really as there is nobody much for her. But we've talked incessantly and had a lot of fun. I've been a bit difficult and fractious because of Mac - one lives so entirely on ones nerves when ones in love. We're being married in April I think but I don't know what happens after that. As long as he doesn't have to go away - darling, darling.

After the engagement and until the wedding there is very little surviving contemporary material, just a few letters between them.

A letter from Iris to Mac, c. February 1941, from 1 Butler Road, Lucknow, partly damaged.

Mac dear,

I'm feeling very guilty because I think I've probably gone and upset you by how I'm being a brute and selfish and silly, but you must be patient with me Mac - you must. You see you've carried me right out into the middle of the storm and it frightens me. I can't explain clearly - perhaps you understand. And even if you don't it doesn't matter. Only if you don't Darling - when I said [damaged word] you I meant it - that [damaged word] from all this uncertainty - and if you can hang onto that and me, the world will be ours - someday!

You'll probably read this when you get back from boozing at the club and it'll seem a bit out of place. Never mind, I had to write it. Forgive me for hurting you by being thoughtless - I'll try hard not to.

Mummy was most amicable when I got in - odd! They killed the porcupine last night.

Lot's of love, I mean it, Totty

A letter from Iris to Mac, c. Feb. 1941, 1 Butler Road, Lucknow

Darling,

This is devotion if you like. I've hardly arrived at this horrible place (horrible because I'm such miles away from you). I've just had lunch and unpacked and that's all. Lunch was rather terrifying with some awful pauses and a slug in the lettuce and I feel a bit lost. I'm sitting on my bed (hence frightful writing) in a room with a stone floor & pink furniture. I share it with Yvonne, [damaged] rabbit. The later is [damaged] with pink eyes that [damaged] on occasions! Oh darling, anything that reminds me of you is lovely. I hate this place and I want to be back - damn, damn, damn! Everyones being awfully kind really.

The journey was rather amusing. All those beautiful men thrilled me of course - I could hardly wait till the next station to fall out of the carriage making eyes at them - so what?! No, actually it was the female in the carriage who amused me - she never stopped talking from half past 7 till 11.30 except for about ½ an hour when I pretended to be asleep out of desperation. She told me her life history - she's been engaged 5 years Mac - isn't it an ??ising though? And she's going to wait another before before getting [married/]. ??? I call it. [damaged] She said she liked keeping her man on edge and gave her ring back at intervals to this end. Would you like to be kept on edge a bit more sweetie?! I don't know much ??? about "tactics" I'm afraid, but I'll hurl rings all over the place if you think it would be a Good Thing! There are so many different ways of loving, like a quotation I read to you once about "She (damaged) track on the Mountain". Only weren't listening as usual! Ours is the best though, isn't it? I can't imagine anything better. Someday perhaps I shall be able to tell you how I feel. But now there are no words. I can think more clearly when I'm away from you, and I can see how silly and selfish I am all the time [damaged] try to be sensible but its no good



[damaged] & the beginning all delight". Sorry to be always quoting but other people invariably say things so much better.

Patty came down to the station – full of talk as usual! I'm going shopping with them this evening & to "Gone with the Wind" to-morrow. I'm thrilled its here. Yvonne is a bit annoyed because I wont talk to her & have lain all afternoon on my bed – writing this & wandering off into a day-dream between each sentence. When I arrived here I poured myself a lemon squash & blithely filled it with gin – so typical. It made me light from a radius of about 3 ft.

I must stop now & be amiable. Will write again to-morrow. Please [write].

Lots & lots of love. Think about you all the time. [damaged] possession I bear  
Xxxx Totty xxxx P.S. In case I forgot – I love you!

A letter from Iris to Mac, c. February 1941, from 1 Butler Road, Lucknow, partly damaged. Saturday [Iris writing 'Before wedding']

Sweetest,

This is the next day – aren't I being good [damaged word]? Only three more whole days now before I get back. I hope you're behaving – I should be ready with all your excuses in plenty of time and provide masses of alibis as to your whereabouts after the dance to-night! I shall be bursting with questions about your movements for every hour of every day!

[I'm so glad] you can't see me now. [I went] out shopping all morning & haven't a vestige of glamour left. The rabbit is sitting at my feet in the middle of a huge cabbage leaf. It looks like a powder puff & about the same size. I forgot to tell you – we have long baths here with running water & pulleys. Its perfect heaven & I spend most of my spare time in the bathroom dabbling about in ecstasy. D'you have long baths in Assam by any chance? I do want to go there, Mac. I should be awfully dull though. I shouldn't even want to go out to anybody else. I don't think I shall anyway once we're married and you'll be champing round getting madly bored while I vegetate and eventually become part of the furniture – if we have any! I've been looking round vaguely for chair covers & things, but its [damaged] a snag not knowing what [damaged]. Have you & Mummy [damaged] of our wedding yet? You might let me know when you decide! I'm so excited, darling, but the old spoon gets going sometimes & I suppose will get worse & sores. Silly really.

This is after lunch & what a lunch. They've got a terribly Important man staying here now, the head of all the C.I.D. in India, & he terrifies me. I go all dumb & dithering when he comes near & say the most futile things which isn't ??? anyway. I'm just off to see "Gone with the Wind" with the Baileys which will soothe me.

I'm longing to hear from you – I hope you've written me a long letter. These ones I write are pretty dull & useless. But if I started saying everything that was in my head I shouldn't get any shopping done! [damaged] much done in any case. I got [damaged] pink flannel this morning. [damaged] There are some heavenly shops here & I shall try & come in again once we've got this bungalow question more settled. Except that it means going away from you and I don't think I could bear it. You are a brute Mac, reducing me to this pulp-like condition. I'm sure you don't feel so idiotic over me. Yvonne is pining after someone who doesn't care for her & pours out all her little heart aches to me. But I can only feel sorry for her in an impersonal way, & dreadfully superior. Nothing matters now and nobody [damaged] to hurt, except you. If you ever take it into your head to make use of that power you'll have me cowering pretty quick –

just where you want me and when! What rubbish I made you read. If only you were here there would be no need to say anything.

There'll be time [damaged]

All my love and [damaged] Totty

Letter from Iris to Mac, just before wedding (wedding eve?) from 4 Cantonments, damaged

My honey,

Thank you for writing. I was just thinking about you and wishing something would happen. You must always write when you feel like it. Have I made you feel sick at everything? I'm sorry - but (damaged) clearing Mac. I know what you feel, when I'm not with you nothing seems real or important, there's an endless sort of longing to be somewhere else and doing something different.

I shall be at the dance, mad with jealousy of Lilo and bored to tears with my escort. So mind you do ask me once at least!

I heard from Patty yesterday - she is trying to arrange for you & me to go there for ??as big-game & stuff - doesn't know if she can fix it. Would you like that?

Till this evening, Love always, Totty

Letter from Iris to Mac, 4 Cantonments, c. end Feb. 1941, on which my mother wrote later 'Just before wedding'

Darling,

It was lovely getting your note when I got up. I'm looking forward too - not a bit frightened and just longing to see you. I don't care a damn about the people. I shall only be seeing you. Darling I'm so happy. Tell me you are [too]. Everyone's pouring medicine down me madly. I slept beautifully.

I love you, Totty

P.S. Please write again.

## 9 WEDDING AND HONEYMOON 1941

In the first draft of 'Daughters', my mother wrote:

My mother sent to convents in South India for beautifully embroidered underwear and the dhurzi sat on the verandah from dawn till dusk running up my trousseau, including my wedding dress, a foaming net and organdy affair which cost twenty rupees. My wedding in March was exactly like my mother's, an archway of crossed swords outside the church, rose petals thrown by little girls in satin dresses. Bareilly had an English church and an Archdeacon to marry us, though he wouldn't have been my first choice. He was lean and mean and worldly; you could set your watch by his afternoon walk to the cinema. He married us in his socks as he had an ingrowing toenail, and asked for his fee while we were signing the register.

Our honeymoon in Jaipur was like my mother's too: very hot and five days into it I got my period and that was the last one until my son was born. Jaipur was beautiful, its wide streets tramped down by camels, with peacocks as common as sparrows, and its people tall and graceful in brilliant floating garments. Its buildings of red sandstone were full of history, but neither of us knew any Indian history so we couldn't appreciate them. We were as happy as two people could be who had lived rootless lives. Mac's parents had left him at school at the age of twelve and returned to Mexico to work, and he had been sent out to plant tea at nineteen. Now he was twenty-three, I was eighteen and we both felt needed, loved, settled. It was like opening the door of my grandmother's flat and smelling the comfortable, safe smell of sandalwood and mothballs.

In 'Going Back' Iris gives a few added details.

'Her mother had prepared a splendid wedding with coloured umbrellas round the compound and little horses and carts to take them from the church and bridesmaids scattering petals. They had even had some men with swords to stand under outside the church.'

'It was her mother who suggested Jaipur for their honeymoon. She had a friend who had a cottage there, and what could be more romantic than the old Rajput desert forts and lake palaces?'

Otherwise this chapter will consist of the film and the numerous photographs.

- *see film, photographs etc. etc.*

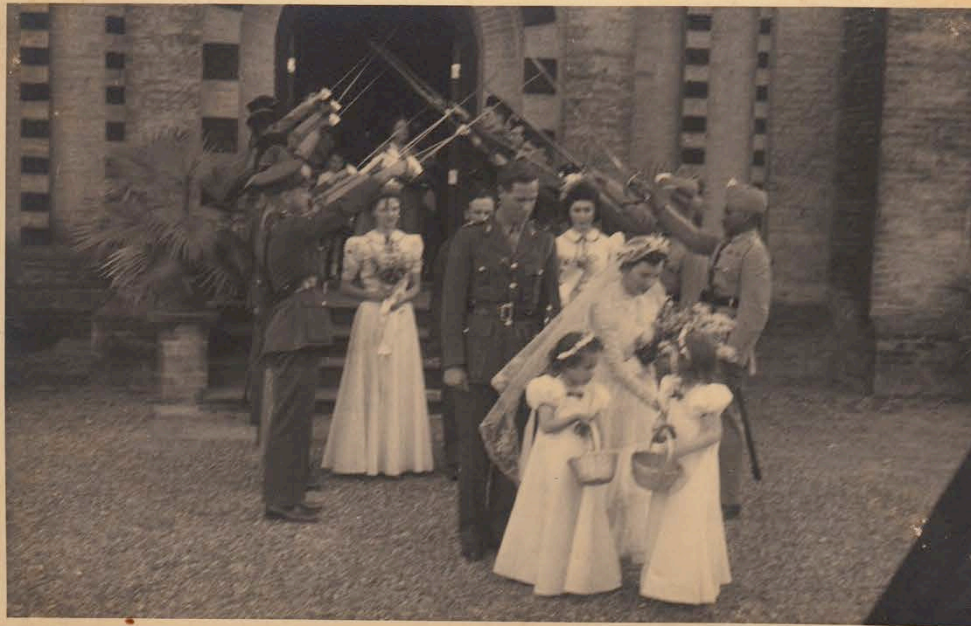












Otherwise there are just a few other letters.

From Iris's brother William (Bill).

6th Gurkha Rifles. Small-arms School, Sangor, C.P. 30.1.40

My dearest Mummy & Daddy,

... Your news about the change of wedding days is most satisfactory. As long as further alterations don't ensue it should strike happily in the middle of my leave. I feel I shall get very much entangled in its organization, but I very much want to be there nevertheless. [description of the course]

Bareilly Club Ltd., Bareilly, U.P. 1/3/41

My dear Iris,

Your Wedding day! The happiest day in your life. May every happiness be yours through a long and contented married life. May a true and noble Love grow between you and your man, so that you may face the storms and troubles of this life with equanimity and faith in your future.

With every kind wish for your health.

Yours aye.

Bill [brother]

P.S. I enclose a few pennies.

## THE WEDDING ITSELF

Letter about Iris' wedding from a guest:

3.3.41 30 Cantonments

Dear Mrs James,

We do want you to know how much we enjoyed Iris' lovely wedding and the party afterwards in the garden. There is no need to tell you how much Sarah enjoyed everything - it really was her "big day"! It was very sweet of Iris to ask her to be a bridesmaid, and I must say I felt very proud to be the mother of one. When we went in to say goodnight to her, after the wedding, she exclaimed "I do love Iris - she talks so softly". Iris looked lovely we all thought - she was the perfect bride - youth, beauty and happiness - and so unspoilt with it all.

It must have been a very trying day for both you and Colonel James - but no-one would have known, and we thought everything went off splendidly.

Thank you both very much indeed.

Yours sincerely,

Moirra Sayers

From Iris:

To Mrs Rhodes James, 4, Cantonments, Bareilly, U.P.

March 6th Jaipur

P.S. Thank you for your letter Mummy, & the cheque. Iris.

P.P.S. Will you please send the enclosed to Mrs Montagu?

Darling Mummy & Daddy,

Well, here we are, in the sweetest little house surrounded by a positive farmyard of animals and loving it all. There are 8 horses, geese, a pigeon house, a cow with three legs and masses of dogs. Most of these are locked away but the 2 which are visible are vast. I should love Macgregor [dog] to meet Monarch - he'd be one large squirming grin - Monarch is a mastiff weighing 14 stone and the largest thing I've ever seen. He's very shy & gentle and adores Mac, but completely ignores me!

However I'll start from the beginning & tell you about Delhi. We got there at about 5 on Sunday, very hot & dusty. The Cecil is a wonderful place with a brilliant garden, bright blue swimming pool and the oddest people staying there. They really were very queer most of them! The food was a dream and there were lots of cool verandahs to sit about and drink iced chinks on - its much hotter than Bareilly. After dinner on Sunday we took a taxi to New Delhi & saw "Pinnochio", an adorable film, as good as Snow White I think.

On Monday morning we did some shopping - some but not a great deal! We didn't get near glass or china shops but concentrated on glamour & gramophone records! In the afternoon we trailed along to see Cynthia & Pat - both in great form. Their hut is surprisingly cool which is encouraging as it is out in the open. They contemplate staying in it all the hot weather so perhaps we could do the same with a few fans around. Anyway we can see when we get back. Pat came over for a drink before dinner looking sweet and seemed to have enjoyed everything a lot. I must say she & Patty were a terrific help in keeping me calm. By the way, Mac bought me a camera in Delhi. I enclose the first picture we took - not a success any of them but I hope the next lot will be better.

We started for Jaipur at 3 on Tuesday & it wasn't a very successful journey - we eventually sat down to dinner here at quarter to 1! The first part was hot & horrid but at about 6 we were going through queer hilly country, most attractive & eerie in the fading light with lots of twisted trees and curling smoke from fires. As it got really dark we saw a few animals, jackals mostly & deer and a sort of wild bison but nothing really startling. This went on for hours & hours & Mac kept getting out to look at signposts which made me hysterical! When we did arrive it took us over an hour to find the place, and we were piled high with enthusiastic but unhelpful chowkidars which we had collected from every gate!

Jaipur is a fascinating place with wide streets and red houses and a beautiful park with a palace & zoo in it. We haven't done any of the sights yet - we went to drinks with the Hoeyes?? yesterday who were charming & are giving us passes for everything. We're just going out riding now - the horses look pretty cow-like, but ---!!

Mac is busy drawing a beautiful undressed lady with lions & bunches of grapes all round her! He is writing.

Bye bye for now. My love to Robbie & the dogs & Mrs ?Murray.

Lots of love, Iris

Letter from Mac to Violet

Envelope dated 10 March 1941

Written in Iris' hand:

'From Mac on honeymoon in Jaipur - March - 1941'

Jaipur 7.3.41

Dear Mother,

I am very sorry that I have not written before but one thing and another seems to crop up and I just couldn't get down to it.

We have had a marvellous time up till now and the place is simply wonderful. Quiet, small and nothing to disturb one. Everything has been laid on. Iris has probably told you all about the occupants. I mean the dogs, geese horses etc.

Lovely riding country. Unnecessary to shod the horses because it is all sand and no hard ground. Iris, at least Tottie, loves it. The horses are as quiet as possible. She has no fear of them at all (at least she hasn't shown it).

We went to visit a place called the Amber Palace today. An amazing place. Rather like the "Taj Mahal" but far more interesting. Tottie was very interested in the Maharani's bathtub. An immense place. Could bath a whole Regiment I should think. She even had, the Maharani, a tonga sort of affair to bring her to bath!!! You can imagine what it was like. Took some rather good photos of the palace. Shall show them to you when we get back.

Had a very hurried letter from "Bottle" today saying that he was getting married on the 23rd or thereabouts. Blaming it all on me because I posted some letter of his. He probably told you about it. We sent him the following wire. WHOOPÉE. WELL DONE. WELL WORTH IT.

What I really want to write about is this. Thank you ever so much for the wonderful wedding you gave us. Really it was simply grand. Believe me. I am afraid I did nothing all the time. I was in a complete spin most of the time. Thank you both again and again.

I am having a grand time with Totties trousseau. I have shown her mine. I did in the first day. One shirt, one new pair of pyjamas and a new collar stud!!! But Tottie, I spend most of my time delving into her bag and pulling out things. She wears about three different dresses in an hour or so!!

I must end now as Tottie is dying to have her dinner. I thought I ate a lot but Tottie says, "Fatty" or no Fatty I am going to eat." I encourage her too believe me.

Give my love and best wishes to all,

Yours, Mac

I shall perhaps do a little analysis of those who attended - Pat, my uncle Billy and others. I don't know why Robert was not in the photos as I think he was there (and indeed took the small amount of movie film which I have of the occasion).



The account of the honeymoon in the letters – which suggest an idyllic time, and my mother's later memory of it as rather hot and boring – seem discrepant.

The generally military tenor of the wedding – uniforms, crossed swords etc. is interesting. I wonder who the local troops were – presumably from Mac's regiment?

And the going away in horse and cart – as I did with my wedding a quarter of a century later – is also interesting.

## 10 FIRST MONTHS OF MARRIAGE: APRIL-MAY 1941

After the wedding on March 1st 1941, and the two week honeymoon in Jaipur, my parents seem to have spent a good deal of the year apart for various reasons. As a consequence, there are quite a number of letters between them, which are the principal source for this year. Although somewhat repetitive, and largely filled with protestations of love and longing, I shall include them all for the moment as again it is somewhat unusual to have such a collection preserved.

First, however, I shall include as a framework the longer earlier version of this time from the draft of 'Daughters of the Empire'. [I may prune parts of this account.]

'Nothing in fact could have been less settled than the future, and I shudder at our effrontery at facing it so confidently; the thought of Mac being almost immediately killed had never entered into my calculations as to whether I would marry him. He had joined up as soon as he could and was with a brigade getting ready to go to Singapore to fight the Japanese. Then he heard a regiment was to be raised in Assam, where he planted tea, and applied to join it. The hill peoples who would form the regiment were the Mongolian tribes of the wooded mountains circling the Brahmaputra Valley, and renowned for their skill in jungle warfare, and for their intelligent and cheerful natures. They would make wonderful soldiers and had the advantage of looking quite like the Japanese in dark jungle.

Everyone said how lucky I was to be going to Shillong in northeast India which was just like Scotland, they said, pine forests and heather and sparkling brooks. The journey to reach it was five days long, and I did it alone with a Siamese kitten as Mac had gone ahead to make arrangements for our accommodation. As I sat in the train feeling sick in my early stages of pregnancy, I was delighted with the country that rolled past the windows, but after two years I was still a tourist. I knew nothing, absolutely nothing about either its past or present. I had seen the Taj Mahal, and the Himalayan snows under sunset and moonlight. I had ridden in the early morning through villages round Bareilly and watched women slapping chapattis on stones, or bending, graceful as birds, to fill their water pots. Now from the train I watched men plodding over enormous landscapes behind bullocks, and at stations sighed over the huddled homeless, the pinched children and mangy dogs. Poor creatures, so dreadfully poor, but better off in some unexplained way for having us the British there.

India was for me, as it had been for my mother and for my great grandmother Maria, a backdrop to the life of the cantonment, which was games, dances, dinner parties, tame ponies on which to amble down sandy paths of a morning for a picturesque glimpse at how "they" lived. Now India was at war, on our side naturally, in spite of Gandhi and Nehru trying to cause trouble. It seemed perfectly proper to persuade tribal peoples down from their hills, to train them to fight for us and in many cases die in our cause. They were not being forced after all, only being offered more money than they had ever seen to do what came naturally to them.

The Indian army had employed my family for several generations; now I was temporarily an army wife. I had no thoughts about the war that was being waged except that it was inevitable and righteous and that we would win it, we always did. Mac looked very handsome in uniform and was very happy too with his new recruits, jolly little men who did tribal dances on mess nights, jumping about with their spears, with hornbill feathers in their hair. Shillong was indeed beautiful, and its indigenous people, the Khasis,

delightful. The women wore hoods of handwoven wool, and sat by the roadsides roasting corn in iron pans and laughing a lot through betel-stained lips. The climate was perfect, the flowers in the cottage gardens enormous, and in the centre of the town there was a lake round which grew beds of brilliant cannas. It was hard to remember what we were there for, war seemed remote, we were safe and happy. We would be happier still once our new home was built on the outskirts of the town.

Meanwhile we shared a bungalow with another young couple called Les and Joan. It had open drains running past the door and a kitchen black with flies, but we could bear it for a few months, until our wooden chalet was ready for us in the pine woods of Happy Valley. A lot of our wedding presents had been broken in the journey over, and we only had a couple of armchairs and a frayed carpet in the sitting room, but as my sickness left me, and my baby stirred, I felt placid and fulfilled. I knitted and planned and walked through the laughing rows of Khasi women between the heavy monsoon showers. No barneys, no disappointing my mother. Mac assured me he loved me more each passing day that I swelled beneath my floral smocks. We had very little money but were cocooned by love and relief that the other was there.

There were only two other regimental wives, Joan and the colonel's wife. The officers were tea planters like Mac, chosen because they had lived in Assam and been members of the Assam Valley Light Horse, a sort of police force run by the tea firms, presumably originating from the wild and unsettled state of the early planting days. It was a remarkable regiment; remarkable in the composition of its men from high mountains who spoke no English and often no Assamese or Urdu and who had no quarrel with the Japanese; remarkable in the intended speed with which it was going to turn such men into soldiers, dress in khaki those who had only worn beads and penis pouches, teach them to handle guns and send them into action against a sophisticated enemy. Tea planters were not perhaps the best people for the job, and the colonels chosen to co-ordinate the whole operation a very curious collection.

The first colonel was a flamboyant career soldier, who thought of the job as a necessary if boring step along the road to G.H.Q; the second a weak and ineffectual misfit; the third a sour and bitter Gurkha passed over by his own regiment; and the fourth a religious maniac and misogynist who left the army to become ordained. How this motley crew came to be selected I can't imagine. It says a lot for the character and intelligence of the hillmen that they turned rapidly into soldiers second to none. On their prowess and courage largely depended the resistance that turned back the Japanese at Kohima.

In that first year as an army wife I was still conditioned to think that I was in a splendid institution whose rules, though a bit like those of Miss Symes [headmistress of St Catharine's school which tended] , yet reflected the necessities of a long, golden tradition. When the colonel ordered us to turn up every Saturday night at the mess, I dutifully did so in my chiffon maternity dress and sat on a hard chair listening to his stories of communications from his great friends in Delhi, who apparently tapped eternally on morse sets to tell him how wonderful he was. A lot of his time in Shillong was spent making more friends: with the Governor and his Lady, the Chief Commissioner and the Inspector General of Police. What they had all said to each other during the previous week was our Saturday night's entertainment.

The mess was a wooden hut decorated with painted wooden rhinos, which were the regimental crest, and occasionally some of the colonel's luminous chums were persuaded to join us there. Then the tribal men were called in to dance for them. This was interesting, but made me feel vaguely uncomfortable. The real purpose of the dances, warlike or religious, had gone. For these young soldiers it was probably the first time they

had been presented with the fact that their private rituals were a source of amusement to white men.

Naga war dances started quite quietly, but gradually worked up to a pitch of excited stamping and whooping that got them ready to go off and collect heads. The colonel didn't consider it seemly to allow the dancers at the mess to reach such a state; perhaps all those smiling white faces might be a temptation. At a certain point he waved a lordly hand to bring the dance to a halt, and the long line of bronzed men stopped leaping and shouting and waving their axes, and shuffled off.

In the Autumn, the big festival of Dasseera was an occasion for invited guests at an outside entertainment, seated on a row of chairs behind a trestle table on the sports ground. Mac was away on a course when the invitation arrived - it was more a command - to attend the Dasseera celebrations. I think he would have forbidden me to go and told the colonel of the likelihood that I would go into premature labour at what I would have to witness. As it was, ignorant and still conditioned to do what a good army wife should, I sat all afternoon watching goats and bullocks being dragged into an arena to have their heads cut off, and their bleeding corpses lugged round to loud cheers. I became violently agitated and wanted to leave, but the colonel in the front row, flanked by his important friends, shook his head and flapped his hand, ordering me back to my seat. I put my head in my hands and wondered for the first time if the army was really right about everything.

At the next mess night I was taken aside and reprimanded for my behaviour, which might have caused offence, the colonel said, to the wielders of the bloody axes. Cementing the Regimental Spirit was an important part of his task, and this meant respecting the troops and their customs. I didn't say that as far as I was concerned they were entitled to their customs, but I saw no reason why I should have to take part in them. I hung my head dutifully and blamed my condition for my nauseated reaction. He was patronisingly kind, and handed me over to his wife, a gentle and subservient woman who had sat through years of bloody rituals on his behalf, and she told me I would get used to such things, which were part of army life. It was at that point that the army, the provider of splendid careers for my family, began to be revealed to me as a lot of stupid rather vain men, working a system based on sycophancy, snobbery, ambition and bullying.

\*

What then do the letters for this period show?

## **APRIL**

No 10 Hut 1941 [Bareilly] No date. 1941 [later April 1941] Iris to Violet

Darling Mummy,

Herewith 2 squares [knitting]. I'm sorry there aren't more, but I'll try & get one more done by Wednesday. I'm feeling rather frantic just now as Mac went pigsticking yesterday & was due back at 2 to-day and its now quarter to 5. I have awful visions of him being gored or stamped on or something, but hope its only a puncture. I feel completely helpless and nerve-wracked!

Thrilling news - I think Nicholas is definitely on the way! Its about 10 days late now and I shall be horribly disappointed if it comes now that I've got used to the idea! Please don't tell anyone - definitely not Topsy! As I want it to myself as long as possible. Mac is thrilled but determined it shall be a girl. All these "its" are a bit

confusing. I hope you've got them sorted out!) I want a boy naturally so one of us is bound to be pleased. I don't know if there's anything I ought to do, I don't suppose there is anything I ought to do, I don't suppose there is for sometime yet. It'll be perfect if we're in Shillong - in fact I'm frightfully pleased & excited and glad those pills didn't work!

I saw Whiteside yesterday and he said (a) He'd had no official information about the thatching (b) it would take sometime to get the reeds etc & would be a great expense & (c) he didn't think it would make any difference. Not very encouraging - but he said if he heard from Daw he would be able to carry it through. What do you think? If we're going away in May it hardly seems worth it and yet I think it would make quite a lot of difference. If you consider its worth it do tell Daw to give Whiteside his blessing & perhaps he won't be able to think of any more excuses!

My diving is spectacular - I go off the top, or have I told you? Its not too awfully hot, and we sleep out now & the sitting-room remains very cool considering. I play quite a lot of rather hair-raising Mah Jong - hair-raising because tempers are on edge and everyone inclined to get acid! Swimming is our real joy though.

Oh dear Mac still not back and its 6. What a life. I'll finish this when he arrives.

Well he's arrived at last and I've bathed him and scraped off layers of grime. Needless to say there's no sign of a pig although they saw masses and rode for 7 hours, all through the middle of the day. Not my idea of pleasure!

Glad Dinah [dog] has settled down, fickle old thing! We will try & get up for 25th week-end if we can get a lift. Heavens I'd like a breath of fresh air.

Must stop & post the squares (in name only!)

Lots of love to all,

Iris

No date. No. 10 Hut, Bareilly [c. 20 April 1941]

Darling Mummy,

I'm afraid there isn't much hope of us getting up this week-end, but I'm determined to manage the one after even if we have to come by train. I'm in the throes of arranging our first drink party - and last I hope! I seem to have asked everyone in the station and can't think where to put them.

I'm not feeling too bright at present, I don't know whether its Nicholas or the heat or what. I get waves of sickness, usually in the evening or early morning and feel generally useless. I hope it will pass. If it wasn't for that I should be bearing up well. I nearly broke my nose in the baths yesterday by colliding with Mac under water - so have had plenty to grouse about lately!

I've just got your letters about Dina, what a frightful experience, I'm so sorry! I feel it was our fault for leaving her, as a panther would be bound to choose a dog that wasn't yours. Anyway thank you for all you've done & I do hope poor old fatty is better. I think she's fairly tough. I opened your second letter first and thought she'd been set on by mad dogs, a panther never entered my head. Mac's only reaction was an urge to dash up to Naini with his rifle! You must let us know how much all this treatment comes to and her keep. I'm glad it was you on the scene - Daddy would have unbolted the door slowly and with great precision & it would probably have got away with her! Talking of nasty animals, the bearer has just presented me with a wicked-looking little snake that he found under our beds as he was bringing them in. Its only about a foot long & thin & I feel sure is a krite but he says it's a Nagur (?). He has just given me a pop-eyed account of the seething colony of Cobras that undoubtedly live in the long



grass round the Compound so I think I'd better tell the Cantonment mali to cut it all down.

The drink party went off very well last night and people simply had to be sociable as they were jammed up against each other & couldn't avoid contact anyhow! We slushed the floor beforehand & came in later to find it steaming like a greenhouse & it took hours to cool it down again – not very helpful!

I've been feeling better since I started this letter so perhaps it was only a chill. We've had some Cuss-Cuss made which helps in the way of heat – nights are still nice.

We thought of coming up by train next week-end & getting a lift back –arriving Saturday morning.

Hope Dinah isn't too much of a nuisance – I think it was very good to have saved her at all,

Lots of love to all,

Iris

## MAY

[N.B. My father's spelling and grammar are a bit erratic. I have not put 'sic' against things. But when a word is spelt oddly (to for too etc), or a word missed out, I have checked my transcript. ]

No 10. 5.5.1941 Mac to Iris

Darling heart,

Found your letter waiting for me after an uneventful trip down weather etc alright etc. etc.

Went to office this morning and think what? Word has come through that I am to go to Assam [The Assam Regiment was raised in June 1941.] This I may say I am very pleased about. No definite date but very likely about the 3rd week of this month darling. Not so good is it. Now you are not to get flustered. I am coming up next week end for a long week end and we shall discuss things then.

I shall put forward my suggestions though and see what you think of them.

I shall manage the bungalow easily myself. There is really, looking round, nothing much to do.

Then I want you to say in Naini until I get to my new station. (Don't know where yet.) and get settled in and then you come down and I shall meet you in Calcutta. How's that. Darling please don't say that you must be at my side etc for packing. I can manage quite well. Anyway, we shall discuss things as I say on Friday next.

I can hardly wait to see you again. Never seem to see my "Fatty" at all these days.

Darling I am just off to Bde [Brigade] H.Q to see if I can palm P.A.D. off to some other fellow so bye bye just now. Write soon. Darling xxxx All my love and hugs xxxxx  
Mac

6.5.41 No. 10 Hut 6.5.41 Mac to Iris

Darling heart,

No letter from you today sweet and I am feeling so miserable. I have not quite got over this thing. We shall not make any arrangements until I come up this week end. I have however decided that I want you to come with me darling if you want to. It is

much to[o] miserable being without you. I have been cycling round and round. Went swimming at about 5 o'clock and was alone there for about an hour. Everybody seems to have packed up and retired. Never see anyone except at office.

Monoo has arrived but there is nothing immediate for him to do. Will you please write a list of the things you want me to bring up this week end so as I can get them ready.

I am sending up those photo's I took last week end. All of them I think are rather good. Bit out of focus but otherwise good. The one of you inside has come out well.

Darling will you ask your mother how much she needs to pay her mali as I must pay this man. I have discharged him from the 1st of the Month.

Also enclosing a cheque of Mavis Buss which you gave me.

I wish you with me now darling. Sitting opposite me on the couch. All I can do is to imagine you are there. Not a good substitute. Write soon darling girl.

All the love in the world darling xxxxxxxxxxxx Mac

Letters from Iris to Mac, from Naini Tal, May 1941, after having left Bareilly because of the heat.

No date. Tonsilitis op.

A White Bed with a Red Eiderdown

Darling Mac,

Here I am - in bed at 6 o'clock - horrible! A nice room, with a fire crackling away and lights & all my glamour is laid in a row [damaged] which is Comforting! I've just had [damaged] close of Cascara so shall probably [damaged] night with no time to think about to [damaged] worrying really much, honestly [damaged] experience & one of my mottos has always been try everything once. I don't think you will be ??? me to-morrow so I'll get Mummy to give ??? instead. I expect you're eating oysters & brown bread now. Its lovely thinking about you - ??? thinking on & on & round & round - & of the ???- oh darling what a life we'll have, with ??? in every tree - with all this it doesn't matter if we don't have heaven too! You musn't mind if I write gibberish, it's the Cascara probably. It will [damaged] at any rate, quite beyond my wildest dreams, I know that.

"How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.

I love thee to the breadth & depth & height  
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight.  
Of the ends of being & Ideal Grace.  
I love thee to the level of every days  
Most quiet need, by sun & candlelight.'

Other peoples words as usual & probably misquoted at that! I'll write you a poem now.

The World is dark & full of fear for some  
But stars & winds to us are dear  
??? me,  
Throw on thy veil, oh night,  
That you & I  
May tread our secret paths  
Up to the sky.

Not very good. Perhaps it would be better if I wrote Modern Poetry

“To-morrow is another world.

A day of days

Praise.

The pigs (who???) have got

To highclass poetry. Not

That it matters now.

Now –

Ever (this is getting knotty)

To-morrow the world sees the Tonsils of Totty.

That's such a good line I think I'll stop there my sweet, I am slightly mad – that big forehead I showed you! I've just had supper – soup & baked custard – and the ??? in to see me. She says no visitors with probably a week in hospital ([damaged] a long letter. I don't have to have my mouth apparently so I shan't [damaged]

I think they're going to turn my light ??? or something.

So goodnight my darling –

All my love & kisses xxxx Totty

No date: Thursday [15th May] 1941 [after tonsillitis operation]] Blyth Cottage

P.S. I cut most of my hair off this morning – heres a bit!

Darling,

You are horrible – you said you'd write “to-morrow” and I haven't heard for 2 days. You probably missed the post but please write soon 'cos I wait for every post and nothing ever comes!

I have just washed my hair and am sitting on the step outside the drawing room drying it. I got up to-day for the first time and feel better. There's no news since yesterday at all except I'm getting on with a little yellow coat for Fiona [name given to likely baby], and I've read a book called “Letters to my Son” by a mother expecting her first baby. Its rather adorable and says a lot of the things I feel. Robert [younger brother aged eight] is back from hospital – did you know he'd had measles – And is spending a few days here convalescing. He was in a room with a boy with whooping cough who later got pneumonia – typical!

Darling none of this can interest you in the least but what there to say except how lonely I am & that doesn't help you or me! Kinks is touring to Shillong in June & will probably bring me if it's convenient. By that time I will be quite well and fat as butter!

This is a horrid letter sweet – if I really let myself go I'll only start again saying how I miss you. I'll write a proper one to-morrow but must get this posted before three.

Write soon precious,

All my love & kisses, Totty xxx

May 21<sup>st</sup> Blyth Cottage [Naini Tall] Iris to Mac

My own darling,

At last a letter from you – I suppose you couldn't have written sooner really but it is just a week since you sent and seems a lifetime. I'm glad you've settled in safely – I

hope you've got rather more than less of the baggage darling! I expect you are out of money. I arrived here with As 8 - I shall be glad of a refill. Actually haven't needed any money as Alastair forbade me to do anything even play Mah Jong, so you can imagine my life!

I'm dying to come to you and am depressed beyond words to think I may not be able to for ages and ages. Honestly darling I can't bear it. I have nothing to do but sit & wonder how much longer it'll be till we're together again & it makes me quite hysterical. But I shouldn't quibble with a comfortable home & Mummy & Daddy. There are some people in Shillong called Storrs-Fox - he is in charge of the I.M.H. I think - & they're wanting P.G's. Could you get into touch with them & find out terms etc? Mrs Colton has already written & warned them so they're expecting you. They're very sweet and homely and it might be a solution till we find our perfect little ??? as we will won't we my honey? Do write and tell me more about the journey and Shillong itself as I want to picture your surroundings. How funny you should be in 4 Cantts, it seems to be haunting you but I hope this one won't be as dangerous as the last! Tell me if you meet any S.B's and mind you only meet them once - I shall probably creep up to Shillong in disguise if I suspect you darling.

There is very little news from your saggy wife - I knit and read and for a change read and knit and go for gentle potters of an evening. And all the time I miss you and want you and love you and love you and can't get at you! Don't be silly - forget all about that last evening - it wasn't your fault anyway. I only felt so miserable leaving you feeling ill I cried for ages, the woman in the carriage thought I was mental I'm sure!

Everyone here says how thin I've got so I'm deceiving them nicely. Fiona has been rather naughty for the last few days and hurled everything I've given her to eat back at me. So I'm in bed at present, hence very peculiar writing. Don't be worried darling - its all quite natural and will pass before long and won't I be relieved! The first baby of the season was born on Sunday - boy - how I wish it was ours.

It will be a wonderful child ours, won't it, the fulfilment of our love and a promise for our future happiness. I want it to have everything, remembering our own childhoods and what we missed and seeing that it doesn't miss them too. But however much I love it will only because of my love for you and wont approach or touch that love. Do you feel like that darling? I feel terribly responsible sometimes about the whole thing, and incapable of dealing with anything so important as a child's upbringing. I want it above all to be happy and have no fears or complexes or loneliness. Never feel unwanted. And I want it to appreciate the important things and the beautiful things - in books or art or nature or people. We do I think, though I don't always live up to them! You mustn't mind me rambling like this, but I naturally think about the subject a good deal and want to talk to you about it and this is the next best thing. Its funny, when I'm with you there seems little need for words - just being together is enough and complete in itself - but when you go away I remember all the things I never say. Horrible aren't I my sweet? But I expect you understand.

There has been quite a row about this play and everyone is seething & Mummy isn't in it any more! The producer was frightfully rude to her and gave somebody else her part to rad without telling her or having tired her and then told lies all round, so she's walked out. Patty is in it. Oh yes - a thrill I met 3 young men a few days ago! They were awfully hairy and slightly Cockney & I was very demure & flashed my wedding round nicely. I also met a youth who I knew you quite well last year - quite a boy-friend in fact - but he treated me with great respect & is taking out Elaine now. Are you relieved darling - I really am very good. There are 32 young men here on courses so perhaps it's just as well I'm in bed (don't misunderstand that last remark!!)

Well, I could go on for ever but must get this posted. I'm glad Dinah has found a boy-friend – you must look round for a husband for her. Don't forget the Storrs Foxes. I'm sorry if I've grumbled a lot sweetheart – it's only I miss you so. Anyway Alastair says I ought to get a little fitter before I travel. I'll write every day – please do too.  
Hugs and kisses darling heart    xxx    Totty

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Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> May 1941 Blyth Cottage, Naini Tal    Iris to Mac

My darling –

Another letter just arrived, 5 days after the 1<sup>st</sup>! I was getting so cross & made up my mind not to write again till I heard! And now that it has come its made me so depressed I feel murderous. I won't wait 4 months - I won't even wait [two words damaged]. I shall just turn up one day and they'll have to put me somewhere but there anyone to P.G. with or who could give us a tent in the garden? I don't expect a bungalow yet. But I'm fussing stupidly and you sound quite contented without me darling & enjoying your freedom with the "blokes"! Poor sweet why shouldn't you anyhow. I'm so selfish and possessive and never see your point of view. I will try and be patient and won't grumble any more in future. Only here there is nothing to do with all the girls working or going out with spotty youths on courses & I'm sinking into a sort of stupor. There! That's that.

Actually I've been very gay to-day & went for a picnic with Grahame, Susan & another youth. We climbed a terrifically steep hill and meant to sketch but had left all our pencils etc behind so merely sat. It was quite pleasant and the first time I've been out or seen anyone for ages. Grahame is up for the week-end and says Bareilly is stinking again. Moti is up on a months leave and having a rare time with the S.B's no doubt but ??? actually seen him.

I told Mummy about the various people you mentioned and she only knows Mrs Whitworth the Brigadiers wife. Apparently a very domineering woman so heaven preserve me from her! There are hundreds of people here I don't know and lots of pretty girls – aren't I glad I'm out of the scramble! I don't see much of Patty as she's rehearsing such a lot and has taken up Shorthand not to mention sailing. Must go & read to Robert in bed so will be back darling.

Fiona is behaving a little better. I have to take lots of strange medicines – iodine and stuff – and eat like a horse. My poor waist line! I'm going to send for some money soon so I hope you've really sent it! Its Mummy's birthday to-morrow and various debts have mounted up. Hope you're surviving, sweet, as I believe Shillong is impossibly expensive. You've no idea all the little coats and bibs & cots & prams I've got to get for Her Excellency, not to mention a few garments to make myself look less revolting in the final stages. You will still love me then won't you darling? Please tell me you love me in your letters, I get terrified that you'll find you prefer your bachelors life after all. You mustn't judge me by what I was like in Bareilly.

Well my treasure it must be "good-night" (that hateful word again!). Write often please – just to say you miss me. Love to Dinah and heaps of it for yourself.

Your growing but very loving Totty    XXX

No date, probably end of May 1941    Blyth Cottage

My own sweet,



Just a scribble to catch the post. I didn't realise letters took so long - yours was written on the 19th & I got it on the 25th! But I don't think it was actually posted till 22nd which makes a difference!

How are you darling? Working hard I expect [damaged] empty bungalow you're living in [damaged] that's life [damaged] be able to come to me till the rains in any case - Bareilly is now. Mrs Wimberley told me that the temperatures were recorded in Mr Kerr's bungalow which is the coolest in Bareilly and they were actually several degrees higher always than in the papers. Its very hot here now, though for the first week we had torrential rain the whole time. Lovely - it makes me homesick though.

It was Mummys birthday yesterday & in the evening we went to see a marvellous but terribly tragic film called "Pastor ?Hale". All about concentration camps and all true. We were harrowed & I wept buckets!

Darling - how much money have you sent to my bank? 'Cos I don't want to overdraw. I'm going to have some minute nightgowns made with blue & pink ribbons. Mummy has finished 3 blankets and we're going [damaged] Am just off to see what I can find.

Please send me some photos honey. It all sounds too heavenly and will be more so in the rains when we can go for walks & get soaked and come back to tea & toast. Is there any water for Dinah - bless the old fat thing.

Longing for another letter - don't carry it round in your pocket too long!

Bye-bye beloved - Tons & tons of love xxxx Totty

No date, probably May 1941      Blyth Cottage    Iris to Mac

Sweetest -

I'm sitting waiting for the postman to come with, I hope, a letter from you. It is a lovely morning, but I think there'll be rain later. It was heavenly yesterday darling - just what we dreamed about. I got into bed, and the sky darkened (this was after lunch) and there was thunder and a deluge of rain, lovely and snug under blankets. I wished you were there & was praying you would be getting it too. I see Bareilly temperatures dropped yesterday but Delhi is 114 degrees! - poor Cynthia, I believe David and Noreen landed on them so they must be having some party.

We had quite a commotion last night - I had gone to bed & Mummy & Daddy were just going when there was a terrific sort of roaring wail, rather like an Air Raid warning. I woke up with a frightful start thinking the thing was in my room, and Dinah got up and started prowling round nervously. It was a panther & must have been just outside as honestly it was a deafening sound. We all got jittery & crept round bolting doors and I lay awake for hours trembling when anything creaked - why weren't you there?! By the way, don't bother to bring up your gun as the Baileys have one you can borrow. You're bound to get it - you'll only have to lean out of a window.

The post has come and no letter. You horrible man. Too busy with the blokes darling?!

Mummy & I are having a marvellous time tying up quantities of blue & yellow wool and knitting tiny booties and blankets & mittens. We have to sit on them hastily if anyone approaches! I'm so excited and can really believe its going to happen now, oh darling think of it. I'm not going to have another for at least 2 years, then we can concentrate absolute on Nicholas (please note!) Are you as pleased as I am - I hope so. I've been feeling practically alright since I came up.

I saw Patty yesterday and told her in strictest confidence. She isn't looking very well. Also met Toinow?? & Re?? which was a nice change!

Must stop as P. is coming. Longing to see you on Saturday sweetheart – hope it isn't too depressing down below.

Bye-bye my porky boy,

All love, xxx Totty

No date ?May 1941 Blyth Cottage

My darling,

I've just heard the thrilling news about the Assam Regt [Mac appointed] & have been trying to get you on the phone all morning in case you hadn't heard. We got it straight from Eastern Comd. Hqrs isn't it marvellous – I'm so pleased darling and will mean you getting out of that foul place. I gather you have to join this month, so there'll be a lot to do. Mummy says Moonoo is a good packer so we can send him down to do all glass & china etc. and they'll do your things which only leaves me. Shall I come with you and do it, next week-end? You can put curtains, cushions etc in one coffin and china in the other and will have to get a wooden crate for glass and a box like a hat-box for lamp shades. Books of course go straight back where they came from. I don't think it ought to be difficult, but I had better come down & supervise. Directly you hear where we're going do wire about accommodation. I'd like to keep the Cook & bearer on if they'd come. I hear Bottle is off and Jean goes back to Bombay – I bet she's pleased! We can discuss it all when you come.

I played tennis yesterday in a green cotton dress & Mummy's shoes & was quite unable to make any contact with the ball! It was agony. Then I went up to see Susan who is laid low with 'flu, and got caught in a thunderstorm coming home. Luckily Mrs M. was too keen to get her dinner to worry unduly about the climate.

The bearer is waiting to take this to the post so I'd better stop. Come up early on Friday my sweet – just dying to see you. My love & farewells to Bottle.

And all my love and kisses to you treasure xxxx Totty xxxx

No date – probably May 1941 Blyth Cottage

My sweet,

I don't know if you'll be out eating curry & rice with the troops now – I hope not. I think this will be the last letter to reach you judging by the paralytic postal system.

It was lovely hearing your voice the other night darling – though it didn't sound much like you! I hope you're not finding the packing too difficult, I feel very lazy and helpless. But I don't think I would be much of an advantage in my present rather feeble state. I'm quite well only not feeling absolutely my best.

Listen honey-bunch – what are you doing about Amelia & Skilly? Mummy suggests you send them up here in charge of that old syce Razul Bur & she could probably find a proper job for him here. That is if the Rayners don't want them. Can't you take 10 days leave now, as I tried to bellow down the phone? Its your only chance. I suppose you're right about going on alone darling – tho' I'd much rather come with you. And Fiona will be furious at being left behind!

Oh darling won't it be fun? You'll have all your planter pals near & we'll be settled for a bit – Dinah will love it too. She's feeling very grieved that you've disappeared so suddenly. I won't want much this week-end – a couple of cotton frocks and my hair shampoo and a large bottle of pink liquid. I do want to hear your views about it all so write directly sweetest.

No news from here – nothing important ever happens without you! I just sit and wait for you to come back to me. Its like being broken in half when you go – we are one person, you & I, and nothing will ever separate us, nothing.

“All other things to their destruction draw

Only our love hath no decay.

This no to-morrow hath, nor yesterday

Running it never runs from us away

But truly keeps its first, last, everlasting day.”

Fiona is being very good only she gets hiccouphs occasionally which makes me gurgle horribly. She sends her love and says she hates to disappoint you but she's sure she's Nicholas!

Well darling heart, bye-bye for now. I'll write to-morrow. Hear the heat-wave has reached you poor sweet.

Kisses and cuddles & lots of love xxxx Totty

## 11 FIRST HALF YEAR OF MARRIAGE - 1941: MAC IN SHILLONG END MAY TO AUGUST

### LETTERS

30.5.41 Bishops House, Kench's Trace Shillong [See Wikipedia etc - an area of Shillong] Mac to Iris

Darling Heart,

Really darling I am awfully sorry about my letters not arriving but yours have been just the same to me, my darling thing so long as I hear from you and I am so glad that are better.

Darling I have rather a lot of news for you. First place I want you to come here within the next two weeks. I have found I hope, never know what will happen in this place tomorrow, accommodation. We shall have to share a bungalow with another couple called Davis. Young fellow in the Regt who has been married about the same time as ourselves. Still it is better than nothing and I must have you here my darling. I can't do anything without you. I feel lost and helpless. I am not just saying this I mean every word dear heart.

Secondly I have been made Adjutant which is where I wanted to get. How I managed I don't know. Suppose I must have been thinking of you and the C.O. must have thought I was puzzling out some Regt problem. But there it is and I want to make the most of it.

I am absolutely tied up with work from 7 A.M to 5 p.m. hard at it. Of course it is interesting but darling, I suppose you are fed up with me harping on the same subject, I want you here to help me. I want someone to go home to and talk to, oh darling I love you so, nobody have ever done this to me before believe me.

I met at a party a lot of S.B. including Ursula Pendlebury's sister Sheila. But I just don't seem to be able to talk or do anything except mumble to everybody in general that my darling wife is miles away and am feeling awful.

Talking of walks darling there is the most wonderful walks. Just like Scotland. Sort of marsh places with moss and little springs. Lovely little burns running about, with the winds softly swaying the pines trees back and forwards. Marvellous. I went out last Sunday for a walk and just sat for a few minutes. Everything was quiet as so peaceful and yet so lonely. If you could only have been there, what a difference.

A little poem my sweet if I remember it properly. It goes something like this:-

There is a land full of quaint phantasy,  
Careless, obscure, remote, a land of rest,  
Where there are found no slaves by toil oppressed  
No fretful nation yearning to be free;  
But golden rivers gliding to the sea  
And sunlight sleeping on earth's warm breast;  
Where the loud tramp of armed battalions yields  
To voices singing in the harvest-fields,  
Where, neath the whispering palm-tree's shade we lie  
Content to watch the warring world go by,  
Who with those Western lands can this compare,  
Fairer by lack of all that they hold fair?

It is, darling lovely up here.

Well sweet heart I must stop and have a bath as it is getting late. Diane sends a big like [lick?] and a few googy looks from her eye. Love to all and to my sweet girl all the love I have xxxxxx Mac

P.T.O. Re money. I am sending money to your account about the 3rd of the month as the fools have sent my Last Pay Certificate here and it meant it has to go back to Bareilly for Cashing. Also I shall send money for the journey etc. Let me know if you can travel please darling.

## JUNE

15.6.41 Bishop's House, Shillong From Mac to Iris

Darling,

Herewith the bearer. I am afraid he will be rather late to help you but I did not get your telegram until late last night.

I am so thrilled that you are coming darling heart I can hardly wait until you do. I shall kiss you all day and night sweet.

Have just been up to government house and we have finished our parade and afterwards we had some beer with the Governor. All very pleasant indeed and no mistakes!

I shall meet you sweet at the Commercial Carrying Companys Station on Thursday about 12 o'clock on 17th. The furniture should be up sometime today or tomorrow so I shall somehow make the bungalow presentable.

Well darling until Tuesday and take care of yourself sweet.

All my love and kisses xxxxxx Mac

P.S. The bearer has more money if you want any more.

18.6.1942 21 Cantts. Shillong Iris to Violet

Darling Mummy,

Here I am at last, sitting in the garden of our own bungalow with pine trees all round and everything peaceful. Before I start romanticising about the surroundings though I'll tell you about the journey. It was all terribly easy in spite of various stupidities on the part of railway officials which I suppose one must expect. When I got to Kathgodam I found they had booked my seat in the Mens as they thought I was Mr Macfarlane, so I had to get into another carriage and change at 9 that night - not difficult but tiresome as it was hot & there were no coolies at the station where I changed. However between us (Grahames & John Henderson were there) we carted baggage & howling kitten along.

Lucknow was very sticky so I stayed in the waiting room under the fan while the G's went sight-seeing and Belinda & I made up for our lack of sleep the night before. When the train did arrive I found to my horror that my carriage already contained 3 Indian women and about 6 children all eating revolting messes and seething over the whole place. I couldn't get any sense out of anybody about it, so eventually hurled my luggage in on top of them and stalked off in a fury to the Restaurant Car where I had to sit till 4.30 when they got off at Benares. This was the worst part of the whole journey as it was pretty steamy and we were held up by a train smash in front. However just as I



was feeling desperate somebody who called himself the Manager offered me his bunk in a room just off the Carriage which I gratefully accepted – rather a comic situation really and I suppose slightly indecent – me lying on his bed while he did sums at his desk – but I was too hot & weary to care! Once I got into my carriage all was well, and the Grahames bearer looked after me beautifully. I said good-bye to them at Howrah as they were going to breakfast with someone, had an enormous meal myself and drove to Scaldah.

Calcutta was extraordinarily cool though[t] it wasn't actually raining – by the way not a sign of those wonderful waiting-rooms you talked about – only the usual dreary affair & not as nice as Lucknow. But I had it to myself so got out my bister and slept like a log till quarter to 1! When I woke my train had come in, Nathu had arrived and from then on everything just happened. The marvel of the whole journey was that I felt so well in spite of heat & confusion – I ate quantities and drank things from bottles and didn't feel sick once. I didn't go near my medicines needless to say!

From Calcutta onwards it rained a lot – the flooding was pathetic & in some places the whole country was under water with a few isolated houses on islands and the water practically up to the railway line. Everything in Assam is so green and cheerful – you never get that bare, flat U.P. landscape. The ferry was great fun & I was enjoying it so much I didn't notice everyone getting off and had to scuttle off myself in an undignified hurry! I got the front seat in a car with a charming Calcutta man at the back who gave me tea & bread & honey at a café half way up but I regret to say I gave it back to him not long after! It's a beastly journey and curlier than Naini & it was raining so I couldn't really admire the view.

Mac met me in a lovely Australian hat and brought me to the bungalow – about the most depressing sight I have ever seen. Large & hideous bits of furniture were piled in dusty corners, not a curtain or carpet anywhere and everything filthy. The rain added to the general gloom and Mac had to dash back to work almost immediately and I really wondered why I had come.

To-day though everything is brighter & I think the bungalow will really be very nice in time. It is a large, rambling affair with wooden floors & white beamed walls and there's masses of room for us & the Davises. They're a quaint couple but nice & I think we'll get on amiably. Our heavy luggage arrives to-day & I'm expecting the worst & hoping for the best! Bathu has been a brick & is still working hard cleaning up. I'm not sending for the Cook as we've decided to share this one & there's only one Cookhouse.

I think we ought to live cheaply as the servants are cheaper and food doesn't seem exorbitant & of course sharing everything is a blessing. We move out to Elephant Falls in about November and are having huts like Bareilly which is perfect. We went round to the Howmans to drinks last night – C.O & wife – & they are so nice. Both young & friendly – you'd love him as he is full of stories of Burma & remembers having danced with you and remembers having danced with you & A[unt]. Margery & knew your father. He just missed your wedding by being on a course!

Excuse queer writing but the kitten is asleep on my lap. She is terribly well & utterly adorable – tell Kings she thoroughly enjoyed the journey & spent the time steeplechasing round the carriage and then falling fast asleep on my shoulder. Dinah merely looks pained & dignified about it but Belinda is definitely hostile, & takes every opportunity of spitting furiously. Thank you very much for her as she really is a birthday present – she's the joy of my life at present & keeps us all amused for hours. I hardly see Mac as they go off directly after breakfast & apart from a short break for lunch don't stop till 5.30 or 6. Its going to be worse when they go into camp as then they only get evenings & 3 nights a week. Still it might be a lot worse.

I haven't seen much of Shillong yet, but the view from our garden is of a sort of park belonging to the next bungalow and the hills beyond & the garden itself is sweet - we sport a peach tree with peaches on! I haven't seen a sign of the famous fruit & vegetables but if I do I'll send some. Which reminds me - I've never thanked you for having me for so long & putting up with my various complaints. I'm afraid I was a trying person to have about! It was lovely being so spoilt - I don't get nearly so much attention here! When I can get Mac to myself I'll talk over the money question & send you the rest of what I owe.

My love to everyone - and thank you very much Mummy for what you did for me. Lots of love, Iris

June 27th 1941 21 Cantts. Shillong [Typed letter] Iris to Violet

My darling Mummy,

I'm afraid there has been rather a lapse between letters but unpacking and straightening out has taken rather a time and even now we aren't really set. The place looks a bit cleaner which is the main thing and we have some electric-blue and terrifying looking chair covers in the drawing-room to match our jail mats and a few nondescript curtains. Unpacking our luggage was a heartrending business as about half the china is broken - no one set is now complete and our vases chipped too. We have 4 of the 8 soup bowls left but Gen Macraes present absolutely gone. It was all beautifully packed too - most sick-making but we're luckier than some as a major in the regiment had two of his boxes broken into and everything pinched. Shall be glad when we move into Elephant falls and can use our curtains etc and have all our own lamps out (these by the way are intact to my great surprise).

I'm afraid it will be rather a squash for you in one of those huts when you come, but at any rate we shall be independent. The Davises who have the other half of this mansion (which has a much more romantic name, (Halcyon House), are very was easy to get on with, but it isn't the same thing, specially as we find the only way to divide the place is to share a drawing room and dining room. She is a large female, slightly of the country I think, and he is a trifle cockney! We only see our respective husbands a few hours in the day, as they never get back before 6 in the evening even on Sundays. Its really a very queer life - we spend our time waiting for them, pour food down their throats and pack them off again and sit back and wait for them again. When they do get back for good they're too tired to do anything but drink and stare into space. I suppose things will calm down eventually. The others in the regiment are very nice - all rather funny little men. Mac is one of the youngest so its quite clever of him to be Adjutant I think.

We've been out hardly at all and have met only a few people. We went to the Club one dance night and watched a Cabaret - the place was absolutely crammed and apparently is every night of the week. Naini is sober compared to it. One day too Mac got back early and took me for a walk into the country - its absolutely perfect with pines and grassy tracks and running brooks, very like Surrey, you almost expected to find primroses. The grass and trees by the roads are emerald green and the soil is bright red. The only big snag is transport as bicycling is useless and it means taxis all the time. Luckily we're central here, only two minutes from shops and cinema and about 5 from the club. The shops by the way are more or less paralytic, but I've spotted a cradle thing and one of these days will pluck up enough courage to go in and buy it! The only reasonable place is what is known as the Assam Industries which has lovely Kalimpong work and lovely prices attached, being a sort of charity affair. We went down yesterday

and helped serve coffee there which was quite amusing as it meant eating a lot of biscuits in the background and looking round the shop.

I have been better on the whole but was in bed for two days with the inevitable tummy – Shillong brand and the most unpleasant I have yet encountered. I don't think I've ever felt so ill in all my life as the first day and was dreadfully sick without respite from morning to night. I got the doctor and he put me right at once but I'm being more careful now. Storrs Fox has been recalled to his depot in Quetta which is rotten luck for her – the present Staff Surgeon is a bouncy little man I don't like at all – not at all sympathetic and always in a tearing hurry. Apparently there is a man called Roberts here who is one of the best surgeons in the world and is in charge of the Mission Hospital. He only draws Rs. 300 a month pay for himself and treats all Indians free – other people pay as much as they can afford. It sounds a wonderful place and I'd like to go there as there is no B.M.H. here. My figure is still more or less intact though I'm blossoming into Concealing Clothes which probably are so obviously concealing they only draw attention! The doctor seemed doubtful that I had gone three months but I was very firm with him.

Thank you very much for your letter. I couldn't quite follow about Mumford and the Cypher business but I hope the Brig. isn't being tiresome and you've been absolved. I found out afterwards that the man I travelled up with was the chaplain of the Calcutta cathedral. I wouldn't have been sick so happily or made him look after Belinda in such a careless way if I'd known. She is full of beans and getting very fat and spoilt. She loathes being by herself and I have to have her in my bed at night – alright until 6 in the morning when Mac has a chota hazri and she becomes horribly wide-awake and playful. Kinks would be horrified by the way we fling her about but she seems to thrive on it and is terribly affectionate. People are booking kittens already poor little mite – there doesn't seem to be a husband for her even.

Must catch the post. Please will you let me know how much I owe for the photos and also any bills that come in for me this month? The Rs. 50 will only cover glasses and odd things like medicines. Mac fancies himself no end in your macintosh and goes prancing off to office in it! Its wet here but muggy – we haven't had a fire yet and are in cotton dresses.

Lots of love to Daddy and Robert and the spots [dalmatians], and lots to yourself.

Iris

## JULY

P.S. Tell Patty I will write & give her my address please!

July 8th 1941 21 Cantonments, Shillong

My darling Mummy,

Thank you very much for your letter & the cheque – which I don't feel I deserve but is gratefully received all the same! I am glad to hear Fiona's trousseau is getting on so well – there's not much progress this end as yet but I shall not be so busy this month & will try to get down to it.

I've been doing a lot of typing for Mac lately & have just written an essay for him on "Esprit de Corps" which anyone could tell he didn't write, it being extremely flowery & off the point. I refrained from telling your vulgar story though I'm sure the C.O. would have appreciated it! Rather a tragedy in the regiment – the Howman's beautiful golden retriever Bose – Dinah's boy friend – died this morning. He had gastric enteritis

whatever that involves & was only ill a couple of days – it is contracted through eating out of rubbish bins. They adored him & are heartbroken.

By the way Howman is the name & he was in the Burma Rifles. He was interested to hear you were coming & you'll be able to dig up your pasts together! It is annoying that you will have to stay in a Boarding House but I don't know the size of the huts & if we could fit 3 in. It would be worth a slight squeeze, as Elephant Falls is so inaccessible unless one has a car. We could easily fit you all in here but having the Davises on top of us wouldn't be pleasant either – anyway there's plenty of time to arrange it. Her name is Joan by the way! It ought to be lovely in the winter – just now the climate is too muggy to be really pleasant. When the sun is out you steam, & I have worn cotton dresses all the time – no fires even.

Last Sunday they got a holiday, so we hired a taxi & drove out to Cherrapungi – a place about 30 miles away which gets the highest rainfall in the world I believe. However it decided, very thoughtfully, to stop for us & it was a divine day – boiling hot in fact & as none of us had taken hats we arrived back with splitting heads & looking like a row of lobsters. The scenery on the way out is amazing – great gorges with waterfalls and hills rising sheer to about 1,000 ft from tiny threads of streams. All this mountain country comes to an abrupt end with a cliff, & you can see the whole of the plains stretched in front of you. We crept into the only bit of available shade under a rock on the hillside, & stayed there.

Mac was asked to lunch at Government House the other day but as I hadn't called I wasn't included (just as well, not being able to fit into any presentable outfit!) He sat next to Lady Reid & swore they never mentioned the weather once but I have my doubts! The only entertaining their Ex's do is give informal lunches – they are apparently charming & completely simple & unaffected. Yesterday we got through our ordeal at the Whitworths – a Charity Concert & supper at their house afterwards. The Concert was very good, chiefly featuring the Lewis - Mortimer clan – they are talented I must admit. The party consisted of about 15 people, among them Mrs Vernon, but I didn't speak to her. Mrs W. wafted up to me once in the evening & said she knew you, but was too busy organising us to be interested in us personally. I didn't care for her much – her manner is sweet & very condescending. He is a genial old bird, rather debonair like Stewart. Apparently Mrs W. suffers from a mixture of anaemia & high blood pressure (sounds odd!) with a bit of Bright's Disease thrown in, so I suppose one ought to make allowances.

This morning we went down to the Work Party & tacked shirts – even I could manage it. They work every day here till 7 in the evenings & on a much more sensible scheme – only tacking is done by hand & then everything is machined. One group of people do pyjamas every week, one shirts & so on, so that one can really get expert at a particular thing. I'm going to try & go every other day as my conscience pricks me about the amount of War Work I've achieved so far! I bought a Kashmiri shawl yesterday for Rs 9 – hope that's reasonable. We are all staging a revolt in this household as Mac & Davis are made to feed at the Mess & pay Rs 3 a day which is rubbish & means a bill of Rs 100 a month for each of them whereas we feed all four of us for about 40! Mac has just returned very pleased with himself because he had written at the end of his essay on esprit de corps "Excellent. Show to all British Officers"! The C.O. must have appreciated my pointless purple passages, but it pains me to have to conceal my identity!

Have a slight tummy upset to-day & consequent sickness, but have been very fit otherwise. Hope your troubles are over & Daddy's periodical attack of Wirellessitis!

With lots of love to you all, from us both, Iris

No date July, before birthday on 22nd 21 Cantonments, Shillong Iris to Violet

Darling Mummy,

I've just read the awful news of Billy Bailey's death & its given me a horrible shock. Do tell me how it happened. I suppose it was heart as it must have been very sudden. It really is cruel coming just now with the wedding arrangements on. I wonder what they will do. Unfortunately I've just posted a letter to Pat, written before I knew and sounding terribly heartless now. Poor Topsy - I feel desperately sorry for her. I don't think there's any point in writing though - she'll be getting so many letters & have such masses to worry about. She will feel absolutely lost I imagine, specially as the house will have to be handed over to - W.T? - anyway the whole situation's perfectly tragic. I will be writing to Pat. This is only a hasty scribble - my proper letter will follow tomorrow. Only I feel so unhappy about them all & helpless to help.

Please don't go sending me any birthday present - Belinda is more than my share! And I think all my allowances had better stay with you now to help pay wool etc.

Will write to-morrow. Lots of love, Iris

July 23 1941 21 Cantts.

P.S. I've forgotten Pat T.S's Travers Smith] address, could you please forward this letter!

My darling Mummy (& Daddy of course!),

Your lovely parcel arrived yesterday, and letters and wire - thank you very much for them all - I felt very spoilt. The contents of the parcel were all adorable, and the dressing jacket so sweet. Who made that little dress? I should love a couple more like it if you could have them made & let me know cost afterwards? I expect it was Mrs Marshall's durzi - there's nobody to touch him here as far as I can find out. In a burst of birthday extravagance I went and bought up stacks of baby wool as the shopman told me no more was procurable - I can always keep it. I have about 6 little coats now - d'you think that's sufficient? I think I ought to start a bit bigger sized things now. Please keep an account of all that you're spending for me - Mac has a mass of pips now and we shall be fabulously wealthy when various transactions have taken place - we shall be getting Rs 900 nearly! I want to put aside a lump sum for hospitals etc and then see where we stand. Perhaps a car might be contemplated a little later.

I had a lovely birthday, as Mac took the afternoon off & we drove to Elephant Falls for tea - we had it perched on the edge of the Falls themselves & Dinah adored it of course. There are a series of waterfalls and you climb down steps beside them - it's most impressive. In the evening we dined at Pinewood Hotel with some planter friends of Macs - lovely food, but the place full of dusty antiques, people & furniture, & very depressing to live in I should think. Prices there are scandalous, drinks etc being twice as much as the club - I wouldn't put my foot inside the place unless I was being treated!

The morning wasn't so thrilling as I went for an examination by Dr Brown - the lady doctor. She's in charge of the Ganesh Das Hospital & is quite young & very nice - quiet & sympathetic. She prodded and punctured me & seemed quite satisfied, except that she said I was rather anaemic and must take those new pills, which I've been rather slack about. According to her the baby is due on Dec. 15th so with any luck we'll all have Christmas together in the bungalow.

The bungalow question is still typically unsettled, but if the regiment moves up in September we wives are going to refuse to be left behind and shall install ourselves in



tents till the huts are ready. I'm sure we could put you & Daddy up for any time, but Robert would be rather a problem – chiefly because of his extreme boredom – with no companionship. Mac & I have worked it out like this (taking for granted that the huts are the same pattern as Bareilly). The front room, which we used as an office, should be the nursery (a) because it has a fireplace & (b) is full of windows. If Daddy & you wouldn't mind squeezing into the dressing-room and using that as a dressing room before it's born, then afterwards you & I could share the big front room & Mac sleep in the dressing-room, with bathroom attached. That is presuming Daddy & infant wouldn't be in the house together. In any case Mac could always move out into a tent. This sounds very cramped & complicated but I don't think would be really – it would only mean servants etc. not using that front place as a passage but going via verandah. We wouldn't suffer, but it would be a bit of a squash for you. Anyway see how your plans work. I should hate you to go into a boarding house if it could be helped. There is no need to come and move me – I shall merely sit put and direct operations! Mrs Howman has lent me a book called “Mothercraft Manual” which I pore over quite a lot but still feel rather impersonal about it all!

My letters are all dreadfully domesticated I'm afraid, but life moves slowly here, for us at any rate. To-morrow we're going to a large drink party given by one of the governors advisors or secretary's or somebody at which H.E. will be present – and I suppose I shall have to appear in my bathrobe as usual – it's the most depressing garment with a drooping sash which manages to tie in just the wrong place! I was sitting stitching shirts dutifully this morning (I can make a shirt in 2 mornings now!) when Bundook Malmstrom shook me by the shoulders with the usual Swedish rapture at meeting people they hardly know or care about! They have taken a house here till September – I must say its quite a thrill seeing a homely U.P. face again. I miss my girlish clusters, but I suppose I must put away childish things and Settle Down someday!

The coolie picture sounds lovely – you must both bring your paints here as there is masses of material – the women are so attractive in their hoods & capes.

I do apologise to Daddy for the Radiant Motherhood in my letters – he must find it tiresome & dull, but it's the only subject I give much consecutive thought to these days!

Thank you again for the lovely things.

With lots of love – Iris

## AUGUST

August 1st 1941 21 Cantts

Darling Mummy,

I do apologise for landing all my girl friends' letters on you to forward, but I can't find or remember any of the addresses.

We have been quite gay lately – for us – and last week went out 4 nights running which is a record and will take weeks of recovering from! The only memorable night was a huge drinks party at the Dennely's (governors Secretary) at which their Ex's were present. Mac, with quite a lot of drinks inside him, spent the evening telling the Prime Minister how Assam should be run, but the old boy took it very well & said he would communicate his views to Gen. Wavell when he saw him! I had a few words with Lady Reid – she is quite beautiful and very retiring. I met a lot of people in a vague way but never gathered any of their names, though some of them helpfully suggested going round to see them. Another night we had a binge at the Mess, and an I.C.S. chap came

and talked to us about head-hunting – very gruesome as there are quite a number of men with those tendencies in the regiment I gather! We have shows at the mess every Saturday which is beginning to bore us, as we have to cough up for them and it isn't really so thrilling when one meets those same people every week-day as well. The C.O. is charming in his way but loves the sound of his own voice and launches ad nauseam into long stories beginning "When I was in Waziristan" which aren't particularly appetizing on a Saturday night.

I've just spent the morning with a girl whose having a baby in October, & she's given me a complete list of all the things I want with addresses. So don't get anything in the way of sheets, nappies, mattresses, towels etc. as I have minute directions about them all. She knows a place where you get nappies 2/8 a dozen – sounds pretty good don't you think? I'm getting 4 vests from Commonwealth Trust so don't have any done. The only thing that seems impossible to find is a rubber apron, so if you run into one could you please get it? She says 4 nightgowns, 4 viyella petticoats, 4 lawn dresses (22" long) are enough, plus matinee coats etc. Could you let me know sometime if we have these or if I'm to get anything in that line ready? I'm sure actually that there's plenty done. Sudden panic has arisen because yesterday Fiona kicked for the first time, and I suddenly realised that all this was personal and not so remote! It made me laugh like anything when I felt her (this "her" business is only to humour Mac!) although I believe some people do dramatic faints. She won't perform to order though & Mac is sceptical still. Ayahs seem an awful price – Rs 40 for sleeping in – but I'm poking round and getting spies out so hope to be able to find something cheaper.

Belinda & Bubbles (the puppy) are now terrific friends and amuse each other for hours. Bubbles unfortunately seems untrainable and plays havoc with our rugs but what can one do? Sharing a house is beginning to be a bit trying as petty things crop up that get on my (extremely raw, I admit!) nerves. However.

Eileen sent me one of those ghastly Good Luck of Flanders things which made me speechless with fury – no doubt its object! [A chain letter claiming to raise money.] Mac says they can be reported if passed round military circles, so Daddy might inform Rex that he'll be having his dear little daughter court-martialled soon!

Must catch post  
Lots of love to all,  
Iris

August 3rd 1941    21 Cantonments, Shillong

My darling Mummy,

Your lovely parcel arrived yesterday and we were thrilled with everything. She will have masses of dresses and the nighties will be quite alright. Thank you very much for them all. I really feel lots happier now. I will keep the vests and send back my own to you as soon as I can. Please – in future don't continue my allowance. Now Mac is a Captain it's just spoiling us, as we can manage quite well without! I'm glad you agree about the pram & I won't have to have a mattress etc made. I would certainly like you to come in November & Mac says the sooner the better as the responsibility of coping alone is frightening him! – the only trouble is accommodation which is unpredictable still. I should think the move into our own bungalows would take place in November but you might have to live for a bit in a Bachelor's Quarter – squalid I'm afraid. If you were here you could help me arrange the nursery, paint bunny rabbits on everything within reach & generally get things ready. Another snag – we don't know if we're to be provided with any furniture of any description and one can't hire here – cheery

prospect having beds & drawing-room suites made, but we're waiting for definite news before we start really raising our voices.

Mac goes to-morrow and I shall slowly start organising the packing – merely directing operations at a safe distance – I'm keeping Nathu with me. I have comic dreams about the infant's arrival – last night I dreamt I went along to the hospital on the scheduled day, feeling very well, & was laid on the floor as the bed was being kept for the baby. The Dr then said "One, two, three GO!" At which the nurse hit my tummy a colossal crack with a hammer. Nothing happened & he said crossly that I wasn't having a baby at all – I'd eaten too many potatoes! When I insisted he produced a Dhow (the war weapon of Assamese tribes, like a kukri) & said Very Well he'd see. At this point I woke so the argument was never settled.

I had a terrific screed from Suzanne yesterday full of Naini gossip & she is thrilled they're to stay on another year. I wonder if Daddy is as pleased! She says Mrs Websters tells Deborah confidentially at ever Work Party that it was a bad mistake but they have no idea to what she is referring. Poor old dear – I'm sorry you aren't "wishing" each other in the street any more! Suzanne says Daddie's only comment on her artistic efforts was they "showed enthusiasm" which depressed her somewhat!

The Comdr. Allison you wrote about is here now & lectured to the regiment yesterday & to the women at the club this evening. Mac was very impressed by him and says all the girls will fall for him & his nautical charm. I want to go this evening but it is Mac's last day so am forfeiting my share of heart-throbs. It's a pity it was to-day as I believe he's very interesting apart from his flashing smile.

Belinda insists on going to sleep on my pad which is trying of her. She is a ravishing animal & in lovely condition – she follows me round everywhere and screams if she's left alone too long – very dog-like. How tiresome of Solly [dog] to produce such a huge daughterful family but I'm glad they're all well. If you still have any left to bring with you we would like to buy one – Mac has a sneaking liking for them in spite of the fact that they "cant do anything" – ie retrieve.

Dinah is fatter & sleeker and more dismal looking than ever – poor old dear, she hates the frivolous youngsters all round her. Their puppy is a terror and messes our nice green rugs every day – they're a sorry sight and it is merely told it is a naughty-little-thing isn't it – so I don't see much chance of improvement.

Yesterday we had a tea-party to meet the wife and endless sisters of one of the Indian Officers – a Gurkha. They were so pretty & spoke no known language so we filled our faces and smiled brightly at each other for an hour or two!

I've just got Daddy's parcel of pills – thank you very much & I'll take the hint! I've been lots better the last few days & put down the sickness to that fresh lime juice I was lapping up so conscientiously & have now stopped. We also have a new cook which no doubt has something to do with it.

Must stop – hope the babies are still flourishing.

Lots of love, Iris

August 12th 1941 21 Cantts

Darling Mummy,

Thank you for your letter of the 6th – the trousseau sounds marvellous and I'm sure there's enough of the dresses side now. The knitting doesn't progress very fast I fear but there's plenty of time yet. Fiona is being very energetic, and I'm still getting slight sickness for no apparent reason. However we've just had a row with our cook here & I think I'll send for ours, though it is rather an expense. He keeps writing chatty letters

hoping we enjoy the climate here and asking tactfully when we shall be getting our own bungalow. I try not to economise over food. Only this place runs away with money in an incredible way and we simply must save! The idiotic part is that Shillong is bursting with fruit & vegetables and fat cows & practically everything one needs, but they get better prices from Calcutta so it's all sent straight down without giving us a look in – a typically topsy-turvy arrangement which means we pay huge sums for things that grow in our back garden practically!

By the way, while we're on the gruesome subject, I believe Nathu wrote to you about his pay being raised. I'm sorry you should be bothered, but he seemed to think you'd take his side and I couldn't convince him. However I do think Rs 40 is too much for us to pay him, even as a Captain, don't you? It's certainly expensive for him here, and lonely too, but all the same I can't believe he should have to get 5 or 10 Rs. more than other peoples bearers. If you do answer him, don't be cross, but please point out that Captain's bearers never get 40 – do they? If you like to enclose a chit in my letter just to satisfy him – I hate you being bothered with our affairs but the old boy seems to think you're quite a divine oracle and is always sending his love to “Marmy” as he calls you!

Mac & I were sleeping off our curry on Sunday when the bearer came in to tell us a sahib from Bareilly had arrived. Mac staggered along shoeless & with hair on end to find, luckily, it was nobody more impressive than Grahame. He's up on a week's leave from Chittagong, full of self-importance as he is to be Adjutant of a new Battallion being raised in Bareilly. We dined with him last night at Pinewood & he informed us loftily that he had got to get through Rs 1000 on his leave – result being we ate & drank ourselves to a standstill trying to help him & felt very sick. Dear Grahame – he is looking so pink & young & trying to wear a harassed responsible expression befitting his Position!

The Bottles are now in Rhanikhet I gather disposing of his boils before he rejoins his Battallion. Little Mottram, Raynor & co have gone to Pindi. In fact Bareilly is quite changed and I'm glad we're not there as it was such fun last winter and will be a very poor imitation now. Poor Mrs Moss – I do hope her baby isn't dotty as a result of hurling herself about like this – she's such a pathetic little thing and I'm sure it would make a lot of difference if she could get through this safely. Belinda insists on going to sleep on my arm which makes writing practically impossible.

Mac has gone down to Digboi on a 5-day scheme to stop imaginary parachutists landing – he left to-day & I'm feeling rather high & dry. While he's away I shall try and visit one or two people who've asked me to “come in anytime” and probably won't even recognize me!

Last Saturday at the Mess we had a v. interesting talk by a man called Jakes on Scotland Yard & the C.I.D. especially - its amazing how intricate the whole system is and how simple the average criminal.

I haven't had an acknowledgement from Bobby of our wedding present (a tea-cloth of ours that was probably familiar to her!). Billy wrote from hospital poor dear, & Richard very sweetly sent me a birthday wire. You can tell Lady B. Maureen is flourishing but if anything drastic happens to her I'll let her know immediately!

Everyone in Shillong except me seems to have been down with 'flu, throats etc & in spite of being snuffled over in and outside the house I remain untouched (its alright I'm leaning heavily on wood!). this is probably due to my living off[f] liver & spinach – I'm sure Daddy will agree.

Must stop for now.

Lots of love to you both, Iris

August 19th 1941 21 Cantonments

My darling Mummy,

Thank you very much for your letter. What rotten luck for Daddy, but I hope he's quite recovered now. I'm really not worried about the trousseaux. Only get strange urges at intervals to discover How I Stand which involves taking out and listing everything. I've got and putting it back again in a different order! At present I'm knitting some pilches – I'm not sure what they're for but they look the right sort of thing to have. I shall also make a couple of pairs of leggings I think, as I have a feeling it will need them to sleep in. The basket is very small, with the idea of putting it into cars & trains, and I'm having a few qualms about whether mattresses, baby etc will fit in!

Mac came back from Digboi on Sunday very thrilled with the place and people and full of patent water-tight schemes as to how to become a Brigadier in 6 months – very encouraging as a topic of conversation! He travelled with a Gen. Heywood who has been in all the “shows” of the war – Dunkirk, Greece & Crete – and was full of interesting reminiscences. Among other things he said that a case of a German parachutist wearing one of our uniforms had never been known – it was all press propaganda. He took the King of Greece out of the country.

Moving in such high circles has gone to Mac's head & he is thinking of applying for Staff College when the regiment is settled. Actually there's more in it than that only I can't speak of it in fairness to the regiment – only there is a lot of unrest and bitterness among the officers concerning the Colonel & his methods and the atmosphere at present is far from healthy. Please don't pass this on. You will see what's what when you come here. And why we don't want to stay with this bunch longer than it's Mac's duty. But we'll be here with luck, another 6 months & then who knows?

The Cummings' drink party was fun until somebody gave me a long orange drink filled with gin which I swigged down in one, turned orange myself & remained in a sticky haze for the rest of the evening. Most distressing. The next night the lads of the regiment gave a rowdy party to which I went minus Mac but surprisingly enjoyed. We have a lot of musical talent in the regiment (among the men) & they perform at all parties. Must fly now as I'm off to see Dr Brown, but will finish this later & miss the post I fear.

Later. Dr B. seemed quite satisfied with me but told me to keep off fats in all forms, including cream & butter which is dreary. There were cues [sic] of women waiting with me, each slightly more bulbous than the last, and we sat and knitted tiny garments and discussed our “conditions” & the general horrors of “expecting” in a cosy way. A female rolled up at the end who informed us she was due to have the baby to-day which made everyone edge away nervously. It was really a comic performance.

Mrs Howman & I went up to elephant Falls the other day – it's too lovely up there, the air crystal clear and so green and sunny. The regiment moves up on September 15th, but there is confusion about us as our huts aren't ready till December 1st. I think the solution is that we move into bachelor's quarters till then, so that the best time for you to arrive would be about 5th December. I hope you won't be bored to a standstill after your hectic life in Naini – there is little to do except watch the beans growing I should imagine!

Grahame said that with petrol rationing everybody in Naini would be wanting tum-tums so you should be able to dispose of the circus[?]. It has come into force here and already there are abandoned cars strewn the roads having run dry.

The dog has just chewed up my knitting so I'm feeling far from charitable!

Must catch the post.



Lots of love to all – Iris

25 August 1941 21 Cantonments

My darling Mummy,

Rather a long gap between letters I'm afraid but I find posting before 11 in the morning rather a strain when my natural tendency, as you know, is to stay in bed till about 10! The chilprufe vests sound lovely – of course they are the best for hot & cold weather, but I balked at the price. I will send my rather inferior ones along when they arrive – I hope they're nice enough to be a fair exchange but I doubt it! Much as I love smocks, don't let the dhurzi go too wild over them will you – I want to try & keep expenses down as much as possible.

I've been giving serious thought to this pram question and have come to the conclusion I shan't really need one at Elephant falls. I can carry the cot out in the day-time and when they're wee they don't have to be wheeled about surely? It also seems a bad thing to keep switching a baby about in the extreme cold. What do you think honestly? I feel we shan't be there more than a few months and it would be just a waste caring a pram up. But I want to do the right thing. The cot basket is ready and is rather sweet – v. simple – I'm having a couple of mattresses made to fit. Does one get plain rubber for the rubber sheeting? And what sort of bath-towels are best? Every expectant mother here has different ideas and I'm completely flummoxed. I'm making face towels out of nappy material. The difficulty here, & at elephant falls, is having nowhere to put things & I'm dying to paint everything vivid blue & See Where I stand!

As I expect Daddy told you, Mac is off on a month's course, which gives me a sinking feeling but must be made the best of. The real trouble is that he is the only person who spoils me or in fact notices my Condition – quite apart from the fact that we can & do prattle endlessly about the subject which is, in some strange way, of no interest to outsiders! He has just done rather a good portrait of me – at least Nalhu & I are much impressed but he has an artists usual dissatisfaction. You must give us some lessons in oils – Mac I know could be really good at portraits & I would like to dabble. You sound fearfully successful – will you paint Mac for me when you come. I'm sure he's got a very distinguished face in a rugged way!

It pours almost incessantly here, but still stays hot – we've only had a fire once & that was really just defiance. Life moves on at a leisurely but absorbing pace – we have resigned the club so only entertainment now is Cinema and occasional drinks parties. I have had a flowing chiffon robe made for the evening which has bows and pleats being ostentatiously tactful & makes me feel past all hope!

We went to drinks with Bundook & husband the other day and she asked me to play golf which was definitely encouraging & took 10 years off the age I feel now!

I suppose you heard Churchill's speech yesterday. As Mac says he tells us nothing we didn't know before, but makes us feel enormously confident as if he had revealed some infallible plan for winning the war at once. This Iran business is also a Good thing and we seem to have come to our senses at last. It brings the war close to think operations are to be directed from India.

11 o'clock I'm afraid – and I do want to catch this post. Thank you for Nalhu's letter, it has done the trick I think.

My love to Teinon?? & anyone else who'd appreciate it.

And lots to you all at Blyth Cottage, spots included.

Iris

29 August 1941    21 Cantonments

Darling Mummy,

I met Bundook yesterday, & she said her mother (Mrs Malmstrom) had bought a Tum-Tum in Bareilly & wanted a pony for it. What about Amelia? I don't know if you want to keep her as a riding pony for Robert, but I thought I'd let you know. I should demand a fairly fat price as they're rolling and mean as anything - even if it is War Profiteering! Her address is 27A Canntts.

It rains and rains and rains. They have gone on a route march to Elephant Falls to-day poor sweets and will probably be washed back. To-morrow there is to be Sports at the camp in which Mac is throwing bits of lead about to the common danger. And we're all going to jeer. It will be pretty cheerless if we're expected to stand knee deep in sodden grass and be dripped on which seems a likely prospect just now.

Personally I like the rain and so do the few beans we planted when we arrived and which we're eating regularly now. Onions died a natural death without putting up any fight, and there are some tough and scorching radishes which we enjoy with tortured smiles and which gave me dreadful heartburn. I'm hoping our efforts at Elephant Falls will be more successful as we're sending to Suttons for seeds. I haven't sent for our cook as we're not going to be independent till December - up till then we have to feed in the Mess - and it's such an added expense having him around. But the horror we have now is going the day after to-morrow - he was producing flies as a vegetable almost and served revolting & indistinguishable messes till we could bear it no longer. My little jewel is willing to wait till December. By the way, is it true that Ala Din is ill & going to stop work? Nathu came pop-eyed with vivid demonstrations of his hacking cough &, of course, a brother of his own in the offing I expect it's all some yarn though.

I have had a little more sickness - always at lunch-time, so I'm trying Bovril at 11 to see if that does the trick. Unfortunately Mac has a passion for it & I always discover him drinking sly cupfuls! My concealing day dresses make me look almost girlish - I hope my comparative slinness doesn't mean a girl which seems the general idea.

I went out to tea the other day with a girl who lost her husband in Eritrea at the beginning of the year - very pathetic as she is only 20 and has a year old baby - Justice is the name.

Just been sick - wot a life! - wish I could feel the really radiant health everyone talks about, but perhaps I'm to be unlucky. Anyway I think I'll stop now and lie down for a bit. Fiona is very much alive which is the main thing!

Lots of love - Iris



Mac in the Assam regiment

## 12 SEPTEMBER 1941

My father went on a course for September and early October 1941, and so there are a flurry of letters between my parents, as well as long letters from my mother to her mother. Here, first, is the account of that time given in the first version of 'Daughters of the Empire'.

'Soon after Dasseera [October 1941] we moved into the wooden house built a few miles outside Shillong in a beautiful, unspoilt situation aptly named Happy Valley. The houses were scattered amongst pine trees and smelt of newly split wood, a great improvement on the open drains. The soil around them was bright red, and they backed onto moors covered in lentana bushes which in Autumn were laden with red and gold berries. I didn't tell Mac about my doubts about the army, which he never shared, and for the moment was indeed delighted with what it was offering me. I wheeled my second-hand pram up and down the wooden verandah, hardly noticing the bombing of Pearl Harbour.

On a night of thick mist five days before Christmas I started my pains, and Mac tried without success to start the hired car that was to take me the seven miles into hospital. Eventually he roused some of his men to push, and while they laughed and heaved I sat in a ditch groaning. I had no idea what to expect, having attended no ante-natal clinics; the spacing of pains meant nothing and when we finally reached hospital I was put into a room alone with the cheerful information that it was going to get a lot worse before it got better.

An hour later when someone popped in to see me there was panic, a lot of noise, shouts to go and get the doctor, banging of enamel bowls, creaking of trolleys as I was wheeled helter-skelter to the operating theatre. The lady doctor, a European in this largely Indian-women-only hospital, rushed in rather tousled and put a pad of chloroform over my face. My son, Alan, was born rather blue with forceps marks on his forehead and because I was unconscious I still didn't know exactly what had happened.

Compared to my mother's stories, my own about this first delivery was quite tame. I had a room to myself, specially reserved for paying white patients, the hospital was clean, the Khasi nurses gentle and cheerful. And yet I was left alone for an agonising and frightening hour during my first confinement. Nobody gave me advice or encouragement, and afterwards the baby was dumped with me to feed and removed again to a strictly timed routine. I had stitches and breast abscesses and didn't put a foot to the ground for ten days. It was not at all what I expected; it was a messy, uncomfortable experience, vaguely degrading. I worried about my little bluish baby who wouldn't take the vast amount of milk I had to offer.

My progress over the first year is noted in a green illustrated book headed 'This Diary is the Biographical Record of the Life of Alan Donald Macfarlane'. It was given 'To Alan Donald from Grannie'. [The details were filled in by my mother.]

[Perhaps insert picture of one or double page]

### Babies Book:

Baby was born at Shillong, Assam India on Saturday 20 at 10.15 A.M. (witnesses signatures D. Macfarlane and Iris Macfarlane)

Weight at birth: 6 lbs 8 ozs

Baby was said to resemble Winston Churchill (noticed by Grannie).

What story do the letters, covering September and the first ten days of October, tell of this period?

## SEPTEMBER

### Iris to Violet

Tuesday 9th September    21 Cantonments

My darling Mummy,

It is a lovely day of blue skies & breezes and I'm sitting in the garden chewing Digestive Biscuits & feeling very well & contented. Belinda is doing a spot of shirkar after a butterfly & Dinah is asleep on her back with all 4 feet sticking straight up in the air. As long as one doesn't have to be energetic these sunny days are marvellous.

Thank you very much for the parcel which I got yesterday – the dress of yours will be very useful and I shan't get anything else made till the smock stage. The soap was a brain-wave as it is the only thing I couldn't find here – I think I have everything in the way of pins & powders & bottles now – except Bath Towels, which I'm vague about. The Chinaman has made me a screen, bath table and legs for the cot, but all out of the best wood & about 3 thicknesses of it so they weigh a ton & costs a fortune – not too bright! However, I've decided to have everything white, with a bright screen & curtains – quite what I don't know, but I visualise pink & blue rabbits on a white ground & wondered if I could stick them on myself – d'you think it sounds feasible? There is still a depressing lack of information re our bungalows but I'll let you know as soon as I have any definite news. I believe the foundations of one have gone down!

Thank you Daddy for getting onto Belletti??. I met him the other day and he explained about the mesh not being obtainable. I was only annoyed about it all, because he got the Colonels house cleared up in a week, but I gather now that it is more the landlord's bunderbust. We're supposed to be getting the Shillong Allowance but I can't follow the pay system here – they seem to cut Rs 150 off our pay straight away & it never approaches what we expected! We've concluded that E.C.Os don't get full regular army pay. What breaks us every month is the Mess Bill as they're made to mess in so much – at Rs 3 a day – & subscriptions come to 40. However one can't argue & we survive!

My life isn't bursting with incident but I find plenty to occupy myself watch my swelling figure with placid enjoyment. I eat without stopping, brush my hair a lot & go out to occasional tea fights – I really have no desire to do anything but potter. There are some waterfalls about a mile or two away which makes a nice loitering walk for Dinah and I and she adores the water of course. One of the lads has let me his accordion which amuses me but nobody else – Dinah howls mournfully. They (the lads) are really awfully nice and ask me round a lot to console me. They aren't much to look at & sport a weird variety of accents but are a good lot nevertheless. Daddy was right about planters – I've met very few one could call exactly "pukka" but they're kind-hearted & jovial & not as snobbish as the Army. Whether I shall spend my life among them or want to, is another matter.

By the way Mummy, thank you for the magazine – according to them our marriage should be a dismal disillusionment for Mac as I always shine in the mornings and do



my hair unashamedly in front of him which are apparently the first steps on the downward path!

I think I have enough little coats now as I know several people are giving me them - if you are thinking of knitting anything those pilches or small-sized leggings would be best I think as its going to be so bitter.

Must try & struggle up to the Work Party - I haven't been for ages. Have you done any more pictures?

Lots of love to you all - Iris

P.S. I thought I saw Hayes at the club last night. Is he here?

13 September 1941 21 Cantts. Iris to Violet

P.S. What is wrong with Mrs Humm?

Darling Mummy,

A very speedy reply to your letter which I only got this afternoon. Reason being I'm in bed & craving for a little conversation. I have one of my really juicy colds which I didn't catch in time and is running its full course - very depressing, specially with nobody to fuss over me & talk to. My head aches too much to read or knit much so I lie in a clammy lump most of the day. Actually to-day I was silly & got up for lunch as I couldn't stick my crumby bed any longer, but feels so grim I hastily retired again. I drink hot lemon & chew aspirin and feel beautifully martyred - I expect it will have cleared off by to-morrow. This is an unhealthy time of the year apparently as there have been several cases of typhoid & a lot of 'flu. We're not well situated as a formidable drain runs along the bottom of the garden - however here's hoping we shan't be here much longer. We've got to buy all the furniture for our huts, and Govt. may pay us back - I have visions of being landed with beds, baths etc & am feeling bolshie. There is no electricity at E.F. so all our lamps, iron, toaster, coffee pot etc will be useless & we shall have to get masses of butties to add to the expense. These rouses are due to my melancholy outlook just at the present moment - actually everything will turn out for the best and it will all be enormous fun I know.

You must come prepared for the Arctic as it is bitter - well below freezing I believe! It's like Heaven to Mac & I to think of having a little house of our own again & a nursery completes the picture - we get gorgeously sentimental over Toast for Tea & Firelight on the Wall! I've only had one letter from him since reaching Sangor the wretch. Graham is there as well as dear Reggie and it is very hot. He also says everybody else (!) is worried by the lack of female society, trying not to make it sound personal so sweetly. It sounds the right sort of place for him to have gone.

Excuse scrawl but this bed has no back to it and after five minutes I find myself prone with the paper out of sight & a hoisting process has to take place.

A few nights back we entertained the Governor & Lady Reid at the Mess, why I don't know but the C.O. always likes to have some big noise about. (He is one of those people whose conversation is full of Major-Generals & Brigadiers, always referred to as "George-a-great-friend-of-mine-you-know). They were made to eat sausage & mash off enamel plates & drink coffee out of enormous ditto cups that were very suggestive! I sat next to her at supper & spent the time drawing attention to these - horrid fascination for the one subject I knew I must avoid. She is so lovely with a marvellous skin & shining white curls & charming to talk to.

Joan's party sounds typical, I went to one once & was in agony all evening! What a joy it'll be to get into my nice evening dresses & go & dance again. We occasionally go

to the Club and I feel very matronly sitting in my concealing clothes watching the young things enjoying themselves. Most of them being twice my age & rather battered. I've even got to the stage of telling Mac kindly to run along & enjoy himself & not bother about me - advice which I'm thankful to say he doesn't take! He is very sweet & staunchly says I look quite normal but I'm beginning to swell rapidly now and even feel heavy. I start my 7th month on Monday so there isn't much longer to wait. The smock etc sound perfect & I shall be needing them as my 2 present dresses will have given out. I shall have to get a couple of warm smocks & have my big coat made up.

I had a letter from Niall a few days back. Dolly is honorary Colonel of the South Lancs which N. says is a "great honour" - I wonder! He met Whalley-Kelley the other day who is commanding a bit of his famous regiment. I have been reading a fascinating book called "The Bride" & a sequel to "The Proud Servant", about Montrose's second love.

Have just had a mustard bath & feel lots better.

Lots & lots of love to all - Iris

24th September 1941    21 Cantonments

Darling Mummy,

No letter from you for ages, but I believe the railway has broken down or something so I hope there is something for me held up. Thank you very much for the huge parcel which little Bola Singh came staggering in with on his return. He was quite overcome when I opened it in front of him and showered out tiny pillow cases! I'm glad he came to see you in Naini - he's rather sweet. All I could gather from him was that the dogs were fierce and the house full of pictures which you were attempting to sort.

The smock and skirt are very nice, the sight of my tummy sticking out of that comic hole in the skirt convulses me. I'm getting a couple of warm smocks, but really aren't worrying too much about the cold as Fiona is a bottle to me. I get purple & panting in the feeblest sunshine, and can hardly sit through a cinema, its most queer. I went for my monthly visit to Dr Brown the other day and she said my blood had improved. She extracts gallons out of my thumb & winds rubber tubes round my arm - I hate it. She also puts megaphones to my tummy and thumps it alarmingly.

Mrs Storrs Fox has been having a rotten time & she is producing too and was suddenly ushered off to hospital the other day as they thought she was miscarrying. They managed to avert it, but still don't know if the baby's alive or dead & whether she'll keep it. She's so keen to have it now he's gone & I do hope it'll be alright.

I went there the other day and we had a terrific gossip, talking solidly from 5.30 to 9 p.m. Apparently she always has some trouble with babies, in which she produces too much water and drowns them - it sounds gruesome. She told me some amazing facts about the Hatfields who she P.G's with last year - they were extracting over Rs. 800 from P.G's and treated them very badly. Mrs H. used to follow her round the house complaining of the way she was treated, how nobody asked them out etc. And had a permanent wail on about imagined slights, Topsy being the chief culprit! Morgan, she says, soaks solidly.

26th. I've just got your letter which must have been held up several days - thank you very much for it. I'm glad your picture was such a success - your painting ought to be quite a profitable affair if you go on at this rate and help towards that ravishing Country Cottage.

Had a letter from Patty & she seemed very pleased with it (the picture). Its rather sad that the wedding reception has to be in someone else's house. Topsy must feel that horribly.

What rotten luck for Mrs Humm. There is a slight typhoid scare here as there have been quite a lot of cases, the latest being a girl who had a baby with it on her & is very ill - luckily the baby didn't get it. Do you remember when I was last injected?

My cold has quite gone & everything's ticking over quite normally. I'm rubbing my tummy with Olive Oil as I remember Topsy telling me in piercing tones at a dinner party it was a good thing and one doesn't get creased afterwards. Don't know if its just an old wives tale.

I'm now staying with the Howman's as my house-mate went off to hospital for a few days and Mrs H. didn't think I ought to be alone in the house. It's a nice change - our bungalow is most depressing really, always dark and bleak & surrounded by drains. The Colonel unfortunately too with a cold - a definitely trying man, though I thought him charming at first. He's not popular in Shillong & I don't wonder - it's hard on her though 'Cos she's very sweet. I'm amazed she doesn't see through him, but she's always openly adoring & panders to his incredible selfishness at every turn. Does Mrs Marshall know him - do ask what she thinks of him, only my opinion is private & confidential please!

Did you see John Hodgen had had a row & is now Maj-General! Mac writes cheerfully from Sangor - he played rugger for the school & got a bit battered I gather as the ground is more or less concrete. The chief interest of the place seems to be the long baths! He comes back about the 5th but will have to go straight out to Elephant Falls so it makes little difference to me. I'm quite speechless & frantic about developments there & don't think our house will be ready in time for the baby - the Bachelor's Quarters are pitch dark & sordid. There is someone living about a mile away who could take you in if the situation is desperate - but its no use making plans yet. What a Country!

I have Dina purdah now & this morning left tied her in the garden for 5 minutes & when I came back found a particularly repulsive pi-dog in attendance so hope the worst hasn't happened! She looks so intensely miserable shut away all day but I must be firm.

Must stop & write my daily dutiful letter!

Lots & lots of love to you all - Iris

**Iris to Mac**

September 5th 1941 21 Cantonments

Mac darling,

I've started well anyway haven't I? Don't damp my enthusiasm by not writing for weeks - as a matter of fact I hope you're doing now in the train - on Bromo if that's all you can afford! Poor wee thing. I can imagine you sitting miserably in the carriage with your terribly compact luggage all round you & Gair's?? pimples as company. Actually by the time you get this it will all be over and you'll be steaming gently & studying hard (I hope!).

I'm sitting on my little verandah chewing Honicose (a black one) and wondering how I'm going to get through a whole month without you. I was terribly lonely yesterday darling and felt as if I would never see you again - the evenings are so long without somebody to tell me how fat and ugly I am. I seem to need you more than ever before now & when you're away the need becomes an ache that nothing will soothe. The

trouble is I take you for granted and its only your absence that makes me realise how much a part of me you are. Darling I love you so & want you – its awful to be so tied to a person & makes parting unbearable. But you musn't worry about me because I'm not moping and will find plenty to do. Fiona is a great comfort & when I feel her punching me in the ribs I don't feel lonely.

Dinah & I consoled ourselves yesterday by walking to those waterfalls past the cricket-ground & she had a grand time fetching fir-cones. We didn't get back till half past 6, and after a grim struggle with the wireless I managed to get good programmes till dinner-time. The Davises went to the club and who d'you think made a stately appearance – the Howmans! Apparently they sat in solitary splendour on the platform until H.E. was due to arrive, when he strolled nonchalantly across to the entrance & bumped, quite by mistake, into the royal party. Leslie & Munroe have just turned up after the usual little jaunt to Elephant falls – they bicycled back! The C.O. couldn't even manage the journey up this time.

They're having the Sports to-morrow – Sandy is throwing your piece of lead & will probably go with it. We took Bubbles to the vet this morning to have her abcess lanced – she had to be pinned down by 6 strong men and is now bloody & subdued, thank God! Belinda regards her with grave suspicion, giving tentative dabs at her cheek & then retreating in a series of coy somersaults. Naughty little cat – she spent the whole night pounding up my bed and trying to sleep on my head & Dinah was giving her celebrated Impersonation of an Earthquake so I didn't get much sleep. This morning we've been paying bills and it broke my heart to see the piles of money vanish but I still have some left & am going to be gay & get myself some biscuits this evening. For Fiona's screen I'm going to get plain white material & stick pink & blue rabbits & things on it – will that be nice do you think?

I wonder if you've met anyone you know – write & tell me all about it sweet, and what you do every day. And if you want anything sent let me know. It's a lovely afternoon, the garden is green and gold & full of butterflies. Perhaps I'll start my book to-day – what do you think?! Anyway I'll stop this now. Please answer soon.

All my love, sweetheart – work hard and think about me. Hugs & kisses xx Totty xx

Your pay for last month & back pay is only Rs 965. I don't understand it – do you wonder I don't trust our advance calculations!

The bearer wants to know if you got the keys of your suitcase alright which he gave to a lorry driver following you.

Sunday 6th September 1941 21 Cantonments

My darling,

This is the next day and I'm again sitting on the verandah chewing Honicose (a yellow one). No letter from you as yet but I'll give you another day before I let fly! I wonder if you've arrived yet – I expect you have and your nose is already to the grindstone (?). It seems ages since you left darling – I can't believe its only 2 days and I've got to get through another 30. I shall have to start ticking the hours off like we did at school – it makes them go quicker!

The Sports were held yesterday & it was Frightfully Jolly – it poured all afternoon and we sat in soggy huddles getting colder & wetter, being shifted after each event to the other end of the camp, wading dismally through damp grass and subsiding again into pools of water with a bit of chair underneath. The I.G.P. was there of course, plus Mrs & a friend (who comes from Johort & has met you but I don't know her name!). These two were in high heels & silk stockings & wore brave fixed smiles on their faces which

took nobody in except the C.O. He was in great form – being fatherly with the men and showing how popular he was till we were nearly sick.

When Mrs I.G.P. asked, by way of showing intelligent interest, how heavy the weight was, he stopped the proceedings & made them bring one for her to feel & we all had to say “Fancy that now” & titter when he pretended it was too heavy for him to carry – honestly it was chronic! The bright spot of the proceedings was tea when it was all over – you should have seen me tucking in darling, but I was chilled to the bone by that time, and everything about me wringing wet. Collinson drooped round all afternoon with red nose saying he had pneumonia but impressed nobody – actually I thought he was looking rather ill.

The Sports themselves were quite good and won by the B.O’s – due mostly to Munroe who won the 100 yds spring and helped a lot in the relay which they won. Sandy was third or 4th in both the events he went in for, and Leslie a good last in the half mile – he & Corporal Jacklin came chugging when we were just giving them up & thinking they’d gone off for a quick one! The ground was too slippery for the jumping really. Since we had the guts not to go to last week’s party everybody cried off last night so I hope the Howman’s & Browns had a rousing time!

The C.O. is frightfully pleased with life as Frederick – an old friend of mine – Major Gen. Grogblossom you know – is coming to stay with him next week. What a party it will be on Thursday with H.E. & Frederick – an old-friend-of-mine eating sausage & mash together to the strains of “Ilkla Moor” rendered by Askey. I shall go just for a good laugh.

Mrs Howman has asked me to tea to-morrow, to “keep an eye on me” I suppose, you old horror! Darling prepare yourself for a shock – I’m going to church this evening. It’s a special service of some sort. That is if I can scrounge some clothes. The Davises are entertaining the lads to-night & I shall watch their whisky disappear with a great deal of enjoyment!

I think I’ve missed the post – bother. The bearer is packing our silver at present and Bubbles has been screaming solidly for an hour as they’ve gone out. I wish you were here – oh daring I do! Never mind, we’ll make up for this horrid time won’t we?

Write soon my sweet. Dinah & Belinda send their love & so do we – lots & lots.  
Xxxx Totty  
xxx Fiona xxxx

9th September 1941 21 Cantts. Tuesday

Darling,

I got your wire yesterday to say you had arrived, and I presume I shall not get a letter from Calcutta – wretch! Not that I really had very high hopes. Anyway I’m glad you’re safely there darling, and I hope the bearer bunderbust is working alright. What sort of rooms have you? And is it unbearably hot – I think September is beastly with the rains stopping but it’ll be glorious here when you get back. To-day is perfect – blue skies & white cotton wool clouds. I’m in the garden, eating as usual, this time a banana. Dinah is stretched out panting beside me, & I feel very contented & well.

I went to tea with Mrs Howman yesterday & who do you think was there – quite right – Monica! Also a friend of hers. It was quite peaceful & nice and we all sat & knitted little garments & discussed our Conditions. We were interrupted by the arrival of the Colonel & Bruno & from then on the conversation consisted of a monologue from the Colonel of what I said to the governor and what the Governor said to me and how amused the I.G.P. was when I told him. Spasmodic gurgles from Bruno of course



- completely nauseating and it was all I could do not to show my disgust. He also spent the whole of tea telling us how greedy Bruno was & poor little B. couldn't take a sandwich off a plate without some fatuous remark about eating more than his share - it was the sort of humour one expects from the 4th Form at school and so typical - not to mention extremely rude. Honestly darling I think that man's mental and the less I see of him at Elephant Falls the better.

They won't sanction furniture officially but we may get it by roundabout ways. God knows where I'm going to put Mummy or myself as even Bachelor's Quarters apparently aren't progressing. These mucky marks are Belinda - she has been stalking round in the grass doing a bit of shikar after a butterfly, and is now trying herself in knots round my neck!

What news is there for you sweet - my life isn't exactly bursting with incident. Joan is thinking of going into hospital for 3 or 4 days next week to have her insides stretched or something - she's worried about not having a baby tho' there is hardly cause yet. I shall be alone then as L. will have gone - it will be a relief actually but I wish you could be here & we could have a few days undisturbed peace.

By the way, to turn to sordid subjects, the Chinaman has given me his bill & it is an awful lot - that box he made for you 5/8 & the Bearer said he could have got it for 4 annas! Shall I pay it or wait for you to argue it out? Everything is ready now except the basket.

Mummy sent me another parcel yesterday but mostly for myself - vast nighties etc. It seems to be getting quite near now & I'm pleased, but sometimes I feel a bit nervous - last night I had a horrid dream about it and woke up scared stiff. I don't think it will really hurt an awful lot, will it?

Darling I'm already ½ hour late for the post but might be lucky & catch it. Anyway its worth trying so I'll stop now. Hope you're well on your way to a D & not being too extravagant!

Lots & lots of love my pet -

Think of me - I do of you all the time    xxxx Totty xxxx  
[cat mark] Belinda

Friday 12th September 1941    21 Cantts

Darling heart,

Thank you for your letter which you apparently wrote on arrival, so I've been maligning you. I'm sorry the journey was so foul - I didn't think it would be so hot now. I don't like the sound of the C.O.'s wife darling - please keep off!! Fancy Reggie being there & dear Graham - the latter still weighed down with Hard Work & Responsibility I suppose. I'm glad you'll "be pleased to get back really" - not very enthusiastic!

At the moment I'm reclining gracefully in bed with the mother & father of all colds - feeling like murder & sudden death. I'm burning hot & aching, my head like a lump of lead & my nose running furiously. I don't know where or how I got it, & I hope I'm not spraying germs over you by writing. Its so hot - my pillow is on fire. I hope Fiona won't catch it, but she seems fairly lively still. I wish you were here darling - I would adore someone to brush my hair and sponge my face - but its just as well you're not as I look particularly repulsive with my nose polished bright red & my eyes gummed up & oozing! I expect by to-morrow I shall be alright.

The party last night was the usual riot of gaiety. We had to arrive quarter of an hour early and were lined up like dummies to greet them - the panic before they arrived was terrific & futile. Bruno was almost worse than the Colonel - he kept telling me where to

stand at which I promptly sat down at the opposite end of the room! The rest of the evening he fussed round like a broody hen trying to “arrange” people – quite impossible as the Colonel had already arranged that he & Frederick (real name Col. Lewis – only a Col after all that!) should share their Ex’s exclusively. I managed to get next to Lady Reid for supper, quite by mistake I feel sure, and spent the time tactlessly drawing attention to the crockery knowing it was the one subject I must avoid! Glory be, what an evening – of course I was snivelling & sneezing & wheezing over everybody just to add to the jollifications. Must stop & eat some lunch now darling – quite an event in my bed-sick life (sick of it I mean.)

This is after dinner – I have been lying in a clammy lump all day & not capable of writing. Now having bathed (in mustard!) & fed I feel better. No letter to-day – I hope because of work, not the C.O.’s wife! Belinda is flying about in her usual bed-time manner. By there way there was quite a big earthquake here the other day – all the windows rattled.

I can’t think of anything to say except I wish you were here & I spend my time saying that. I’d like to scratch your head and see that goofy, droopy expression you always have after dinner. Oh darling –

I suppose I’d better try & sleep, helped by whisky & lemon.

Good-night my love,

Hugs & kisses xxx Totty xx

Please answer about Chinaman – he haunts the place!

No date, 14th September 1941 Sunday 21 Cantonments, Sunday

Darling,

I’m feeling so miserable as I haven’t heard from you for three days. I’ve been trying to console myself by reading your old letters, but its made me feel worse because then you used to want to write every day even if you had seen me. Oh Mac its made me feel terribly unhappy to read those letters because I know you don't feel like that now and it must be my fault. Perhaps I’m imagining things because its late at night and raining – but I feel frightened and depressed & unsure of you. I couldn’t do anything without you now and if I knew you cared less for me I should just lose heart. The wind is howling & I’m lonely and want to be reassured you love me as much as you used to – and to have you close to comfort me. Do you remember one night before we were married we walked along a sandy lane and talked about black pits of depression. I’m falling into one now because I have lost something of you – oh Mac don’t laugh at me because I couldn’t bear it. I want you, I want you – now, to-night, to tell me its not true what I feel. Everything seems black & I know I’m writing rot but I must write it. To-morrow I shall be alright. I can’t explain this feeling – I only know I want to have your shoulder & cry my heart out. You musn’t mind me – I’m quite stupid sometimes – I always have been but it passes. If I have disappointed you as I know I have try & remember that there are bits of me, underneath, that are more worth-while & perhaps you will find them one day.

It is such a miserable night & I must go to bed. My cold is nearly better.

Good-night dear one – ignore what rubbish I’ve written here. Totty

No date. Monday 15 September 1941

What is your mothers address – the number?

Darling heart,

Still no letter to answer but I'll contain myself for one more day – then heaven help you! This can't be a very long one as the post goes in no time.

We all trotted off to church yesterday on the loveliest evening for weeks – the sky a riot of salmon & gold, it seemed wicked to be in. It was grim, as when we arrived the church was absolutely packed and we were led self-consciously right to the very front row – in front of the Governor & Brigadier & the Colonel. The latter was just behind & completely overcome by sitting next to Mrs Brig – I only heard a few muffled murmurs from him during the service and I wouldn't be surprised if he wasn't finding her places for her!

We went straight back from church to debauching with the lads – Munroe, Askew and Cooksey with Ethel & Bubbles as bait. The party started at 8 and went on till quarter to 12 – I was nearly dead with hunger & sleep & we only finally got rid of them by open threats. Askew & Munroe kept up an unintelligible stream of backchat & Cooksey sat close to Bubbles & got redder & redder – actually it was amusing for about 2 hours but after that a struggle to keep awake. Anyway I don't enjoy anything without you darling – honestly!

I have been quite fit since you left – no sickness or anything – the worst part of it now is feeling so heavy and inert. By the way what did you do with your mess bill?

Must catch the post sweetheart. I'll write at more length to-morrow. Bless you –

All my love, Totty

No date. Tuesday 16th September 21 Cantonments.

Darling heart,

Two letters from you to-day so I feel better as I hadn't heard for 4 days and was feeling utterly deserted. In a fit of extreme misery I wrote you an incoherent letter which you probably couldn't make head or tail of but I was in an awful state at the time & had to do something about it. You haven't written that letter yet saying you love me and oddly enough I'm not tired of hearing it, so please do darling! I look forward to the post the whole day so when you're missing me in the evenings sit down & tell me so on paper – please.

I'm sorry about the gun, I didn't think the shooting season had started yet in any case. Perhaps it's just as well though with cartridges such a price – I found out to-day that we had the staggering sum of Rs 420 in the bank at present & at the end of the month that will probably be gone – so much for these months of saving & our inspiring calculations! I expect you're getting cross already and thinking "There she is at it again – nag, nag, nag about money" but darling I loathe it as much as you and would love never to have to have sordid discussions – which usually end in scenes. But we must try & save the next two months so try & not be too abandoned in cashing cheques – I see you have cashed about 5 already. Don't be angry with me for bringing up the horrible subject – I know it's not your fault that we can't save but the fact remains.

Darling, darling, say you love me quick and kiss me and don't let's quarrel about anything so unimportant. How did the rugger go – I hope you managed to avoid ant-heaps and emerged with all your limbs intact. It must be a bit hot work & very bad for you I'm sure but I expect it brings back the Old School Tie & your Murky Past generally?!

Tick-cha came back from his course to-day with weird stories of going to cinemas in Calcutta which you never mentioned – strange! He went to see Mummy in Naini and she landed him with a vast parcel to bring me, full of eiderdowns and tiny pillow cases

with ducks on them – poor little Tick-cha was quite overcome when I opened them in front of him. He was feeling a bit shy and I couldn't gather much of his impressions of Naini, but from his murmurs I gather Blyth Cottage was typical pandemonium of dogs and Mummy trying to sort out pictures for an Art Exhibition & Daddy probably trying, ineffectually, to get the news! He is coming to Saugor on the 6th but you will be about leaving then won't you – when exactly does your course end?

Fearful commotion here as The Move is in progress & lorryfuls of giggling Assamese have been depositing themselves on the doorstep all day collecting Leslie's furniture. The dear "Les" & bearer have also departed & peace reigns again. I dread to think of the chaos up there & they'll probably all develop pneumonia as the evenings here are quite chilly & must be bitter there. My cold lasted three days which I spent in bed, & is alright again now. Apart from that nothing has happened at all that I can think of. This morning I went to see Dr Brown and she seemed quite satisfied & said my blood was better. It seems funny to think I shall only go there twice more before Fiona's debut – can you really believe it – I can't sometimes. I'm beginning to feel she is a person now with a character of her own. Its rather queer. Do you think of it much and feel excited? I hope you aren't sorry we started families so soon – it has spoilt our first months in a way I know, but we can make up for it afterwards can't we sweet? We've got a good start on most people and much longer to be happier in.

I'm writing this after dinner and feeling full & sleeping & sentimental. It's the time when I want you most, but Fiona's kicking like mad and I don't feel so alone. I've just read a book called "The Bride" about Montrose, full of the bonnie Highland heather & bits from Burns nobody could possibly understand. I've also – prepare for a shock – started a book of my own. It is drivel & irritates me intensely, but I'll labour on & hope for inspiration.

Must stop & fall into bed –

All my love dearest heart – Totty

Monday 22nd September 21 Cantonments

My darling,

I'm now in sole possession of the house as Joan went off to hospital this afternoon. Its pouring with rain and if only you were here it would be lovely – its so peaceful without Bubbles careering round, just Belinda & I & ?Betavia. The wireless hasn't been very good by the way but seems to have reformed to-night. Actually I'm not going to be myself long as Mrs Howman has asked me to go there for the few days J. is away & I'm going to-morrow. Its very nice of her, though I wouldn't have minded being alone. I suppose its better not in any case just now as I might have got ill in the night or something & there wouldn't have been anyone for miles. I hope the C.O & Bruno don't turn up too often – they're now proud possessors of motor bikes and fly daringly round at a good 15 m.p.h, the Colonel a suitable 30 yards in front & both looking petrified but persistent. Apparently there is quite a ceremony launching them at Elephant Falls and fierce betting takes place as to which will get out of sight first!

Joan went out there yesterday & says the Bachelor's Quarters are quite nice & nearly ready. I hope the Colonel won't be angry darling at your writing to him about the houses. J. says there are a few logs in the compound of his bungalow but otherwise no sign of life. We have got to buy all furniture ourselves & may be paid back – d'you think its worth sending for your stuff? I shall only get the very minimum and anybody who comes in will have to sit on the floor. I'm having the rugs cleaned at terrific cost – I

hopefully told Joan about the staggering sum they were asking thinking her conscience might prick her as it was mostly Bubbles' mess, but got no rise!

Darling nothing has happened at all since I last wrote, literally nothing. Yesterday they were out all day & I was sick after lunch and after tea walked to Pinewood to see the flux's, but they had left the day before. The days just drift by, all the same, and I feel this is a period of waiting. Life seems to have stopped for a bit. I'm happy in a cowlike way but longing for the time to pass.

By the way don't let my groans about finance make you send for more money 'cos I won't touch another penny, darling of your father's money, & that's flat. We can manage & we're going to. You must get to Staff College – have you had any reply from Colonel Porter yet? Perhaps this time next year we'll be living in John-and-Monica's house & have the Colonel oozing round us watching us entertain the Brigadier. What a hope but it makes a pleasant picture.

Well my love – no more for now. Please write often, & let me know when you're coming back. Not very long now & I shall cry for days I know I shall feel so weak & happy. Love & kisses sweet. Totty

September 27th 4 Cantts. Iris to Mac

My own darling,

I haven't written for several days as the railway line has been up and no letters have been coming in till to-day so presume none have been going out either. I've just got your letter in answer to a very depressed one I wrote, and it made me awfully happy. I don't really doubt you darling, only I sometimes doubt my power to keep your love, or anyway keep it as strong. I'm terribly possessive I'm afraid and its agony to me to think that even a part of you might slip away. Other people seem to be able to portion their love out sensibly & evenly, but you & I, I think, aren't like that – we have to have each other or nothing. Only with you darling am I really myself, with other people I'm always acting. And so want you to be proud of me, but I feel that with my leg & everything you never could be I know you're sweet & say it doesn't matter but I feel it does and want to make it up to you in other ways. Our baby will want it – it will be perfect in every way and we'll be so proud of it and make its life happy always, and remember our own childhoods and the things that used to upset us so we can avoid them. As long as we have each other and our children (!) nothing else matters does it? Success doesn't matter, or money (very much!) as long as we can keep young and in love. Which we will for ever. You mustn't take my moods & depressions too seriously sweetheart. I always have them & they don't mean anything really only I do want your shoulder when they're on!

As you see I'm living with the Howmans & having a jolly time. As luck would have it the Colonel arrived the same day as me, thinking he was on his deathbed with some minor complaint of his nose, and has been here ever since. He sits humped up in a chair most of the day making revolting noises in his throat and complaining of draughts – all the doors and windows being sealed as usual! Meals are melancholy affairs in which we all sit in an admiring silence listening to dear Ross expounding on Albert or George, great friends of his & inevitably Major-Generals, and champing loudly with his mouth open. His manners are incredible – he thinks nothing of reading a paper at lunch. But honestly I'm amazed at Mrs Howman – she sits in open-mouthed admiration listening to his futile blatherings and roaring with laughter at his childish efforts at wit. I don't wonder he's so spoilt & conceited because she panders to him at every turn and says "Yes Ross" & "Of course Ross" & "There, there Ross" until I feel



positively sick. Mrs Brown is just as bad and Bruno impossible. The whole house grovels round his highness and I just sit and register contempt which nobody notices but gives me certain satisfaction.

We drove out to Elephant Falls the other day but I'll refrain from comment & anyway my language couldn't be strong enough. I'll save it all up till you come back. I shan't see much of you when you do, sweetie, as you'll have to go straight off and I don't know when I can join you. The Bachelor's Quarters are pitch dark, but I don't really care, & shall come as soon as they're ready. The climate out there now is perfect, & you have a lovely big office with a roaring fire & your bed in one corner. Anyway I'm not thinking too much about the vexed question.

I heard from Mummy & her portrait of Pat nearly got awarded first prize in the Art Exhibitions which was rather good. She's coming about the 11th of November I think. I've seen quite a lot of Ruth Justice lately & she's very nice and dreadfully pathetic I feel with no interest in life except her baby. She says Ross was just as unpopular in Delhi as he is here.

Don't batter yourself too much playing violent games darling. And please tell me when to expect you back. Must stop & get this posted.

Bye-bye darling heart

All love & kisses, All love & kisses xxx Totty xxx    xo Fiona xo

Monday 29th September            21 Cantonments

My darling,

Two letters from you after a long gap due to railway hitches. You must take care of yourself darling and not get poisoned arms & things. Have you seen a good doctor & are you fomenting it every day - the bearer could do it for your. Don't be careless about it, cos these things develop so quickly. Don't play rugger if you always get battered about it isn't worth it. I believe Tickcha is coming to Saugor soon & I'll send along some ointment with him.

Was horrified to hear to-day that your course doesn't finish till Sept [sic] 18th - did you realise it was going to be so long? I suppose theres nothing to do about it but I feel very depressed to think of another 3 weeks without you. Have you any chance of being chosen as an instructor? I wouldn't mind being settled anywhere for 2 years but not if it's a horrid job. You're quite right to decide to say on in the army (not that you asked my opinion!) - it has much more scope and interest really. Do you seriously think theres a chance of Staff College & the C.O. will agree to you going? It would be simply wonderful & I know you could do it, only I'm a bit uncertain as to Ross's reactions.

The bungalow situation is quite hopeless - they're making them one by one & say ours will probably be ready by the New Year! Its Mummy & Daddy I'm worried about as they won't be allowed Bachelor's Quarters & for them to live in Shillong is footling with the taxi fare Rs 12 to Elephant Falls. Deary deary me, life is indeed complicated. I'm quite resigned to bringing Fiona back to Bachelors Quarters - everyone is out for themselves & not worrying about other peoples babies. Don't fret yourself anyway as theres nothing to be done but wait & see.

Darling don't listen to a word that beanstalk Bates tell you - he's an awful youth & quite ignorant of my past which you know is extremely pure! He once picked me out of the dust when I'd fallen off Mrs Murray but otherwise I can't think of anything in his favour & his dancing was punishment enough for anyones murky pasts - mine naturally not included in that specification! You might write to Chalymdy & ask him if he'd like to be a god-father - what is Bosun's address - I'd have written ages ago if I knew.

I'm still feeling rather poorly as a result of watching revolting Pooja ceremonies at Elephant Falls this morning – hacking up poor little goats, masses of them. We were given seats of honour within a few yards of the charming performance but when they brought the first goat on Joan & I beat a hasty retreat & sat on top of a nearby hill where we couldn't see too much gory detail. Even so it was beastly – the little things struggled & cried & afterwards they dragged the bodies round & round shouting. We tried to drink cups of tea but felt too ill to very very far, & all the way back in the car we met headless hulks being dragged along the road. Altogether a pleasant morning.

The Colonel is still fearfully ill – did I tell you his temperature went up to 99.4 every night – you must remember him in your prayers darling! Mrs Howman used to stagger out with this information & there would be an appalled silence & I felt like asking if she had any hopes of him lasting till morning. He took at least 6 different kinds of medicine & occasionally tottered dramatically out in a sort of home-made gas-mask, very very impressive indeed. Do you know he went to see the I.G.P. every morning I was there!

Mummy wrote to say Skipper Likeman is coming here, & I heard from Kings she was too. She asked if I had had much trouble with Belinda when she was on heat but as far as I know she hasn't been – I'm expecting the worst anyway & watching her figure with almost as much interest as my own! Dinah is locked away & attracting every repulsive pi-dog in Shillong, they even keep me awake by scratching & whining all night.

With which savoury subject I'll close! Write often sweetheart & take care of yourself. I shall be wanting more money if you're away so long, but not immediately.

All my love, lovely one xx Totty

## Mac to Iris

7.9.41 Saugor C.P. India [Hyderabad area]

Darling,

Well here I am in Saugor. I hope that you got my wire alright. It is quite a nice spot but pretty HOT! The journey down was simply terrible, really. We travelled down four in a carriage and from Calcutta there was five of us. Most awful arrangement at a little place called Katin where although there was an ice factory within fifteen miles you could under no threat of at least Murder get a cold drink of any sort. However my travelling companions were very nice lads (one of them being the redoubtable "Percy"). Really quite a nice lad drinks too much and won Rs 1/8 off me at cards the other evening.

Calcutta was very sticky indeed. Had lunch in Firpo's and then passed out. The lunch [illegible two words] consisted of Ham steak dressed crab and a rather peculiar quivering jelly.

Rather extraordinary, Reggie Low and Graham Sell are here attending a course of some description. I haven't met Reggie yet. I have met no one else I know well. Lot of faces etc I used to see at Bilgam and places but that is all.

Bye the Bye darling all the boys except me are champing their teeth because there are not women or at least girls here. I say everyone except me and possibly some of the married people!! So it does seem rather funny having such a lovely club (I have been told they have) etc and yet no one to give the place a kick. CO's wife is a real tarter, makes all the lads lose their hers and they shys off.

Darling heart I have written this on my arrival so I want a reply soon as poss.

I am missing you terribly already and shall really be glad when I am back. I don't know darling but I always miss you so badly and am really never happy unless you are about. Shall write again tomorrow.

Xxx All my love and kisses xxxx Donald

No date. Saugor, C.P. [Early to mid September 1941]

Darling Heart,

Have just received your nice letter sweet. No I shan't let you down and I am going to write to you every few days as I promised. I am so sorry sweetheart that you are lonely and believe me I am just as bad. Its an awful feeling and the only thing about it is that I have plenty to do to keep my mind occupied, but you haven't unless of course you are beating up the chef or whatever else one can beat up.

I have settled down more or less have got down to serious work. They don't give one much time for anything else here. Work all day and lectures in the evening. I wouldn't mind that so much but one must also deliver lectures and be able to teach a squad on any weapon under the sun! I shall come back, of course, an expert orator, and shall pit my powers against the Colonel. Warn any of the lads to be prepared for the worst. Actually it is all most frightfully interesting and I am enjoying it very much. If only you were here it would just make the difference darling. I have a lovely room, I mean plenty for you and I, of course Dina and Belinda could fit in.

I have met quite a no. of people I know as I mentioned in my last letter. All quite a good crowd. I haven't had a beat ?? up yet myself and at the moment I am sure I don't feel like one? I have not as yet spent all my money. As a matter of fact darling I won Rs 21/-/- at cards on the train coming up. I don't play cards usually and I suppose it was beginner's luck. Anyway nothing would induce me to play again that day and I have hung on since (By the Bye the game was bridge)???

I went and saw a picture last night called "The Middle Watch" Jack Buchanan. You have probably read the book. Ian Hay wrote it, I believe. It was most amusing. Lovely American damsels getting taken out to sea in a warship and the usual complications arose. Good fun.

I am afraid I made an awful mistake in not bringing my gun down here as there is the most wonderful shooting around here. I wish someone had warned me. I could have sent you some snipe or possibly a nice big piece of tiger leg. It is not worth sending down the gun now anyway.

Darling you know what I am going to do, play a game of rugger for the school or something. I feel in most terrible training and shall probably be lame with stiffness for weeks. However lets hope with aid of a few long rest in the touch line and some "sucky" lemons I shall survive the game.

I have got the keys Nathu sent and also his brother is here. A very good bearer by the way. Younger than ours but very good quiet and clean. Recommend him to anyone.

I have written a letter to the Unit Accountant about that Rs 965/-. It is scandalous and something will be done. I don't know how the racket in the army works at all.

Bye the bye the messing here is Rs 3/-/- a day and the most frightful stuff too. Committee has been installed to something about it amongst them myself being one of the bigger complainants.

Darling I was so pleased to get your letter and was most amused. Actually I was reading it amongst a crowd (not out aloud to them), and laughing to myself. I think they must have thought I was 'bats' but I didn't care! Please send lots more like it darling.

All my love in the world darling. Keep good care and go to the doctor and let me know the result.

More and more love sweet xxx Donald xxx

No date - ? September 1941 (A) Saugor, C.P.

Darling heart,

I am very disturbed by your letter saying you haven't received one from me.

Honestly sweet heart, I wrote on the Sunday after arriving and it was posted Monday morning so by the time you wrote on Thursday it should have arrived. Anyway by the time you get this you will have realised I did write and have been writing regularly.

I am also worried about this accommodation. I have written to the C.O. and have put the case to him, and asked him exactly what he thinks we can do. I mean it is ridiculous if no arrangement is made. The dash C.O. is so full of his own ends that nothing else seems to matter. It could have been got over quite easily if we had waited a bit longer anyway.

Anyway darling don't you worry please because I feel so awful all this way a way and you worrying darling. I wish I was back with you sweetheart.

Had a letter from my sister. She has just got engaged to a Lieut. In the American Navy. I am not needless to say pleased. I was always against her marrying an American. But what can [one] do!

The family according to her letter are not pleased at least my Father isn't. She has turned into exactly what I warned her not to. American to the core. Simply awful letter full of Americanisms etc. Still she sends her love to you and says that from your photograph you must be a sweet Kid!! A 'Killer diller' in fact, what ever that may mean. [a musician that plays all out] Isn't it awful. I was awfully fond of Sheila and she has done the one thing I did not want her to do. Still I suppose one must resign to things happening against ones wishes sometimes.

Also had a letter from Pat Emerson. He seems full of beans and is doing Adj of the 10/4th. He say Bottle and Jean are back in Bareilly and Bottle is again P.T. merchant. Bad luck on him. Also mentioned 'Bosun' who he says is Adj of his Bn [Battalion]. I must write to Bosun sometime. I feel awful for not doing it before.

The course here is still interesting and I hope I can qualify. It is most difficult but still, darling, I actually put in some private study. I can see you say "I hope so". But the private life of an individual here is very limited I can assure you.

That wonderful game of rugger I was to play was cancelled for some unknown reason to me. Something about the ground being too hard. Anyway I played hockey instead which made me equally stiff the next morning. Which reminds we have here an excellent cure for stiffness. I don't know if you have guessed what it is. Long BATHS. Absolutely superb. Yes, I must say the rooms are nice but the feeding is really awful. There is also a lovely swimming bath here. It is very nice all round. If only darling you were here I should love it.

I am really getting bad now and missing you awfully much. I shall [be] back though soon and darling I am going to kiss you and kiss you. Chew your little ears and neck. Just wait.

Bye By just now sweetheart and all my love xxxxxx Donald xxxxx Fiona xxxx [Fiona referred to the infant, thought likely to be a girl, my mother was pregnant with and would end up as Alan in December]

P.S. My mess bill has NOT been paid. Will you please do so darling. Ask for another one as I have lost it.

No date ??? September 1941 (B) Saugor, C.P.

My darling,

I did not choose this small paper, it's the only paper I have in front of me. Darling your wonderful. I have received two letters from you now, at least I received three altogether and two yesterday telling me, and it dealt me a severe blow, that you had been to church!! I nearly went to my room and did solitary confinement just to insure that I would not go 'bats' on the spot. Anyway good show. Keep the family tradition up. It needs someone to do it and set 'Fiona' an example. Have had my nose to the grindstone and work has really been quite difficult. You must have before you come on this course, pre course training otherwise you haven't got a hope. Like me! I think I can manage to stay here without getting pitched out but that is all. It is really good fun and it makes one quite fit. Bayonet training is a bit of a hard nut to crack especially after breakfast or lunch.

Half the squad is Indian and the cracks they come out [with] are simply wonderful. The Instructors to are grand blokes.

I have just been chosen to play for the school Rugger team and only hope I shan't die with palpitation of the heart. I played yesterday and took things easily only flinging myself about when I was certain I wouldn't land on a heap of stones or a nest of red ants.

I wish you were here darling heart. I am so lonely in the evenings and someone to talk to. I get really miserable sometimes thinking of you so far away with that horrible crowd up there. I realize now what a bunch they really are. It won't be long though I hope before I am back and I am going to press for this Staff Course as soon as possible.

Darling I am sorry for this scrappy letter and I am going to write tomorrow and tell you how much I love you. You must be getting fed up with me doing so but still I am going to.

Just imagine me tonight whispering into your ear. "I love you sweetheart".

All my love, Donald

Please take [care] of yourself, and let me know when you want some more money.

No date ??? September 1941 (C) Saugor, C.P.

My darling sweetheart,

I have just got your letter darling saying you are so depressed and you were in a big depression. Darling little thing you musn't. I wish I was there. I don't know how you can ever doubt that I love you darling. I love you as no one could ever do. You know perfectly well I could not do without you. It is only thanks to you darling that I am what I am now. That is honestly true. Before I met you I was rapidly going to the dogs drinking and spending far too much. You pulled me out of that. Look at the times we are together, I am always happy when I am with you. Now you are going to give me a little boy or girl, O! sweetie. What else could I ask for. Perhaps I have been very selfish to you and not told you I love you enough. You ask anyone on this course who I know and they will tell you that they are fed up with the hear of you. You have no idea how proud I am when the blokes are talking of marriage etc and I say "Ah but you ought to marry a girl like mine. I not only love her but she is the best friend I have in the world". That is absolutely true. It is not only that I love you deeply totty but I do and always will regard you as all I have or want. It is only for you I am working and trying to do anything in this blasted world. Perhaps I take you for granted but that is only I assure



you because I love you my darling girl and it is only when I am away that I realize how much I do. So my little girl you must never doubt me, never, never. When you are in the black pits and the spoon is churning away inside you must always say to yourself, well there is one person in this world who would do anything in the world for me. You may think the little finger as a jest at times but it is absolutely true and any time you do lift it in earnest you should know by now what will happen.

Sweetheart wait till you and I are at home I mean Scotland or England. Think of the lovely time we shall have. Looking to far forward of the time we shall have at Elephant Falls in our own little bungalow with our own things all round us and Fiona making little gurgling noises to us. Trying I should think to tell us what [a] lovely time she is having. Just think of it sweet and forget this awful moments that comes to two people when they are so much in love with each other.

Well life here is still hard and one has hardly a minute to spare. I played rugger for the school yesterday in one of the few spare hours and got knocked about a bit. Nothing to worry about. I always seem to get my head in the way. Wonder all the sawdust has not fallen out yet.

Write soon darling and tell me that you love me as I do you and that you won't doubt me ever, please.

All my love and more darling girl xxxxxxx Donald

X Fiona

## 13 OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 1941 - FIRST CHILD

### Iris to Violet

Saturday 4 October 21 Cantonments

Darling Mummy,

Thank you for your letter telling me of Skipper's visit. I played Mah Jong with Mrs Storrs Fox the next day, and she is going to ask me along to tea or dinner with him when she can get in touch. I'll give him a minute packet of vests to take you - they're not nearly as nice as yours I'm afraid & they've been ages sending them. I got the parcel from the Neyoor?? Convent with three sweet dresses & a couple of pillow cases beautifully embroidered - they're really lovely. I have everything now, except the flannelette blankets which I'll get this month - I've been trying to space out the expenses!

The latest cheering news about the houses is that they won't be ready till the New Year, at least ours won't as the Colonels etc are being built first! I have made tentative enquiries about a couple who live quite near the camp & I believe take P.G's, for you & Daddy. Isn't the whole thing typical & infuriating - I am so longing to settle in & get things ready but am resigned to pigging it, & baby in Bachelors Quarters. The ayah question is also knotty as they are against coming anywhere so lonely & ask Rs 40 & 50 for sleeping in, tra la, what a life, but I suppose something will turn up and smooth out the chaos.

Mac doesn't return till 20th or so blast him! Poor sweet, he seems to be getting very battered playing rugger for the school, & last time I heard had a poisoned arm which I expect he's neglecting hopelessly. The mails are still held up and letters irregular. The big Puja ceremonies are on here & the other day we watched some revolting sacrifices - masses of little goats having their heads cut off amongst much shouting and joviality. I removed myself as far as possible but a horrid fascination made me watch and I felt poorly for a long time. A very silly sort of amusement.

I'm looking forward to hearing about the Gynkhana - didn't Mrs Murray get hoity toity at having to mix with the other horses - or merely coy? I'm having a merry time with my family as Belinda is also on heat & it's a whole time job keeping her shut in. She isn't particularly noisy, but wanders pathetically round making little cooing noises to herself & practising abandoned attitudes for future reference!

I had a letter from Kinks (please thank her) saying Biddy was so tiresome she gave in & let her go to her husband - perhaps Belinda is still too young to mind much.

By the way, I was sorry to hear you had been seedy & hope you're alright now? You've probably been doing too much. I'm quite fit except for annoying heartburn nearly all the time which I expect is a phase. I can't believe I shall be starting my eighth month soon - the time flies in spite of doing very little. I'm trying, without visible success, to grow vegetables in boxes but am not really surprised at their diffidence in making an appearance as they are regularly dug up by the Davis's darling little pi-dog. Which reminds me, she says she will give you Rs 30 for a puppy if you haven't sold them all when you come - don't know if that's an insult, but I said I'd tell you! They sound sweet & I should like one, like old Fatty, only don't save a good one - we shall probably never show it.

Could you please tell me, Daddy, where you got your paints etc from as I want to get some nice blocks, brushes & so on for Mac for his birthday - as a gentle hint. We have decided that if they condescend to ask us, we shall stay on in the Army after the

war. It's a big "if" but doesn't stop us making airy plans about when Macs a Brigadier. We shall never have any money in the army, but I think it has much scope & the planters I've met here have very little interest in life beyond drink as far as I can see. Two of Mac's friends are taking their leave in Naini I believe - one of them Mrs Pontin's brother.

Don't forget to take in every detail of Pat's wedding as I'll be dying to hear about it all. What are Topsy's plans?

I hope this catches the post & doesn't get held up too long.

With lots & lots of love to you all, Iris

P.S. did you see Jacki Dorman-Smiths wedding in the papers?

9 October 1941    21 Cantonments

My darling Mummy,

Masses of things to thank you for & a letter from you just arrived. First the two parcels - the net robe is the loveliest thing I've seen and perfect for a christening robe. I opened it in front of Phyllis Storrs Fox & her friend who are both producing & they were fearfully envious - it really is exquisite thank you so much. The other robes are lovely too - I'll be able to put her on a new one every day. I'll return them to you, eventually to keep for the next grandchild & hope they won't be drifting back in my direction too soon! The parcel of maternity dresses arrived this morning & of course I had to wrench off my clothes on the spot & try them on - found it a bit difficult to decide what went where but eventually manoeuvred them right - & they both fit beautifully, length & all. They are much prettier than what I have at present. I will enclose a note for Mrs Om thanking her for the pretty pillow case. This trousseau is going to my head, and I turn over everything giddily at least 3 times a day - hardly improves their colour but gives me a lot of satisfaction.

Skipper arrived yesterday, plus friend, and asked Mrs S.F. if she would put them both up - of course she couldn't but routed round & got them some rooms in a hotel. I went round to the Storrs Foxes in the evening and saw him for about half an hour. He was full of beans & boyishly pleased about his promotion - quite a different person from the querulous old man of a few months back. We all felt quite weak, in fact, at such an exhibition of chest-slapping vigour & nearly demanded if he'd been at Our Enos. Dear old Skipper, it's nice to see him young again I hope he reports me looking well - this letter is due to return with him. You have a treat in store for you next June as he & Eileen are giving a combined entertainment - the first half of the programme a piano recital by her, followed by a Mystical Play written by him. He explained this later to us at some length but the impressive climax was somewhat spoilt by Phyllis saying innocently "It's lovely. Now tell us the mystery"! Her husband is back again on more short leave prior to departing - these continual partings & meetings & partings again must be very trying. I like him awfully what I've seen of him. I stayed to dinner after Skipper left and we played Mah Jong plus the other occupant of the house who is having a baby in about a fortnight. They say Shillong is one of the most fertile places in India & it certainly seems so judging by the queer shaped women wandering about it.

About the houses - we're a little more optimistic now, and if they can get glass for windows I think they might be ready by the middle of December. Pinewood Hotel I'm afraid is beyond us as its Rs 12 a day & I doubt if the old hag who runs it would reduce. However I've written to a Mrs Woodford who lives about a mile from Elephant Falls, suggesting she should P.G. you. I believe she's v. nice - her husband runs the Gov. Experimental Farm up there & she has lots of dogs & plays bridge so you ought to get

on! If it comes off I think it'll be the best thing & I could spend most of my time there & get out of the Bachelor's Quarter. We will arrange something anyway - don't worry.

At present we're having a merry time getting furniture for the bungalows and in the interests of economy are going to live in on or under packing cases! Bathroom furniture & dining room stuff is what hurts most - also hot cases, doolies etc. If you could bring two easy chairs it would ease things considerably - I'm hoping to borrow or steal beds, bath etc for you & Daddy - oh & could you bring a mirror for yourself - I shall try & rig up a dressing table out of the inevitable packing cases!

Mac writes cheerfully & seems to think he has done alright in the exams - to-day's letter informs me he has been asked out to bridge (!) with somebody who signs herself "Yrs, Peggy" & he professes not to know who it is - just as well he is coming back soon I think! I did contemplate having Dinah mated but (a) Couldn't hear of a good dog & (b) felt unequal to coping with puppies when everything was so uncertain & I didn't know where we'd be living. I'm sure she won't have pi-puppies - I only left her a few moments & she is a very refined old lady! Belinda & she are both normal again - Belinda more adorable than ever as she grows up.

We went to a grand film the other day "Foreign Correspondent" - you must see it if you have the chance as its amusing & exciting. Hope Robert enjoyed "Thief of Bagdad" & wasn't frightened by some of the "effects". Please thank him for his letter which I'll answer. I was a bit dismayed to hear he had "licked" John Whites mad dog but presume he meant "liked" it!

I have made 6 Bath Towels & am starting on the Face Towels. I have all the necessary knitted things now I think - mostly contributed by you & other people but still. It is pouring here & has been all day. I hope it keeps fine for Patty's wedding which will be on about now. Our present, of course, will be late, but Kalimpong is so hopeless.

Must stop & go to bed - lots & lots of love - Iris

### **Iris to Mac**

Tuesday 7 October 1941 21 Cantonments

Darling,

I'm really being very noble writing to you now as it's 9.30 & I've had an enormous dinner & feeling terribly sleepy. But I feel I shan't catch the post to-morrow unless I do - and also - have you remembered? This time last year you were sitting beside me in the Cinema for the first time. I don't expect you even remember the film - ah well, such is marriage! We would have been surprised if we could have looked forward a year and seen ourselves married and practically parents, and I expect would be just as surprised to see ourselves a year hence. It's a surprising life in fact, but I hope, darling, you don't regret the carefree days before you met me, when you didn't have to bother about money & nagging wives. I expect you found the company of the "blokes" much more restful. (a big piece of bait on that line!)

We're having terrific fun & games over furniture at present & I wish you were here to help. I'm getting the bare minimum & expecting you to knock some pieces of wood together to fill in gaps! Life is such a muddle - don't know what to do about putting up Mummy. The houses are slowly going up, but apparently there is no glass for windows though the C.O. was careful to inform us he had written to G.H.Q. about it.

We went to a very good film this evening - "Foreign Correspondent" - grand except the cinema kept breaking down.

Darling darling – come back to me soon – my pillow is getting worn out with all the love I lavish on it. Am too sleepy to write more – hope to hear from you one of these days – the post I suppose.

Hugs sweetheart –  
Totty

Friday 10th October 1941      21 Cantonments   Iris to Mac

Darling heart,

I was just getting quite inarticulate with rage at not hearing from you for a week when I got your letter saying you had been having exams – so you’re forgiven but don’t let it occur again! Hope you’ve done well darling – I’m sure you have. Only 8 days before you start back – you will leave on the 18th won’t you? I’m afraid I won’t see much of you when you do come but at least I’ll know you’re within reach.

Bachelor’s Quarters are ready but no glass is available – we shall probably still be here when Mummy arrives & that’ll be a deadlock if you like. I’ve written to Mrs Woodford of the Gov. Arm to ask if she would P.G. her from 15th & if she can it’ll be a load off my mind. Darling can we borrow beds & a bath from the regiment while she’s here as I can’t go buying an extra lot, they cost the earth. Life is one large Problem at the moment.

Darling I don’t like the sound of your goings on at all – accepting invitations from strange women – I best she’s a Snarer of innocent young Subalterns & I hope you were firm about the wife & family (nearly!) you left behind you. Has Percy found anything to get passionate over in Saugor. The gay old girls of Shillong are neglected as Paddy is also away on a course.

It pours & pours here – hasn’t stopped since day before yesterday & the spiders are weaving cobwebs round my corner of the sofa as I practically haven’t stirred from the fire. I shall go mad if I can’t get out soon.

Day before yesterday Skipper Likeman was here and I went over to the Storrs Foxes to meet him. He is a different person altogether – frightfully hearty and boyish, almost painfully so, like an advertisement of “Who’s been at my Enos?” He had first been inspecting Elephant Falls but I didn’t like to ask his impressions of our venerable Colonel. I stayed to dinner after he left & played Mah Jong – Storrs Fox is back on more “leave prior to departing” & so she is very happy – though I should think these continual partings are a strain. He is stationed in Bareilly.

Oh before I forget will you please write to Baird or whoever’s responsible & ask for the Railway Receipt for our luggage as the baboo here says he can’t make enquires without it. Please do it at once darling.

If you’re not going back to Tea, couldn’t you ask for your Provident Fund now – otherwise they mightn’t give it to you at all! “I’m hanging on to 21/2d so I hope you’ve remembered that money I asked for.

Fiona is flourishing and avowing huge – you won’t be able to get within 3 feet of me, I warn you darling. Mummy has sent her the most ravishing robe which she can be christened in & Mrs Vivian a little coat, & she’s also sending us a picture (she’s the one who painted all the pictures in our house.)

Mummy is taking Robert away from school as he is always ill thee, & sending him back to Bunny – she took him to a party at G.H. with Skitty as usual alongside, & Skitty careered all over the royal lawns thinking she had come to heaven! Robert asked her to

pull his socks off the other day saying “they’re so damnably tight – I don’t like using that word, but that’s what they are”!!

Well my sweet – au revoir and be good for the short space of freedom you still have!

Love & hugs & kisses always –  
Totty

### **Mac to Iris**

No date – c. 3 October 1941 Saugor C.P.

My darling sweet,

I am afraid darling that I have not written to you for a few days as I have been incased in work and exams. Thank goodness they are all over now and I think I have done quite well. Enough anyway to get a Q1 which is all I want.

Well darling I am afraid you are right they have decided not to let us up until the 18th of this month. That is just over two weeks from now.

It will soon be over now anyway and darling I just dying to talk to you and hold you in my arms and bite your little ears, that is of course if I am allowed to do these things nowadays. Won’t it all be grand fun again. How is the little one. I am afraid I am getting tremendously excited and can hardly control myself. I babble all day about it to “Pop eye” and “Passionate Percy”. They both just passed me and send their love etc although they haven’t met you.

Bates was very amused when I told him you had called him a beanstalk. Still darling I will believe you. If you were going to like anybody else I should think they would be better specimens than Him.

I am awfully annoyed about these bungalows etc. Why the dickens the arrangements in the blasted army could not be better I just don’t know. Absolutely typical of course.

Darling I am sorry about not asking you if I could not stay in the army but actually it was your suggestion really. S.C. [Staff College], there is a chance. I am pulling every string to get there and funnily enough so far I have managed to get more or less all I wanted! Darling now don’t take me wrong because I am in one of those moods when I want to tease you and ruffle your hair.

I am going out to play bridge this evening with some Major or other, actually his wife invited me. Wrote me a chit and signed it Yrs, Peggy. Never even met her Still?!!?

Well sweetheart I am going to write again tomorrow Sunday and let you have a better letter.

All the love in the world sweet girl xxxxxx Donald

8.10.41 Infantry School, Saugor, C.P.

Darling girl,

I am afraid I have been very bad just lately but I have not been feeling to well. I have broken out all over with small sores and the least scratch goes sceptic. I don’t know what it is and have drinking and taking a Tonic. It probably is that I am run down a bit. Don’t worry though darling I shall be alright by the time I come back and that won’t be long now.



The course has come really to [a] stop as far as physical work is concerned and we have one written examination to pass next week and then finished and then darling if I could fly back I would.

Did you see in the papers that Mrs Moss had a son after all! I am rather glad for both of them really. They seemed such a miserable couple one way and another. I am writing a chit to Major Moss Congratulating him.

Yes I think sending Pat that thing was a good idea. I shan't try and spell it as I should get tied up in knots and I haven't got your letter at hand.

Darling you must think my writing is awful but I am trying to write holding it between my thumb and small finger as the others are indisposed.

There may be a slight chance of getting back here, not I may say because I have passed my previous examinations well but because of my instructional ability. I wouldn't really mind now. The cold weather would be rather good fun and very interesting.

I played my bridge darling and won Rs 4/12/- sweet heart. Swelling the old bank balance!

Another thing that amazed me was that I received a Registered letter from Meerut. I thought that must be something awful when I looked on the front of the envelope as it was from the income tax office. On opening it I found that His Majesties Government owed us Rs 4/8/-. I nearly fell down with excitement. Shall we have a holiday in the Indies on that!

I enclose Rs 200/- (cheque) as you asked for. I shall be back by the end of next month if you want more.

Well darling all my love and excuse the scrappy letter.

All the love in the world xxxxx Donald

Violet's diaries give the dates when she left Naini and came over to be with Iris for the birth:

14.11 leave Bareilly

15.11 Arrive Calcutta

16.11 Arrive Shillong

Here is a poem which Iris wrote around my first birthday, in December 1942. It gives gives a rather intense insight into her dreams for me.

### **First birthday (December 1942)**

Fat hands, pink cheeks, blue eyes,  
Filled with surprise  
At the strange ways of the world.  
Fair tendrils of hair that lie curled  
On a damp brow.  
You are so terribly, touchingly, innocent, now  
Will it all turn to dust  
This lovely trust?  
Can we build a land of dreams come true  
Out of this chaos, my son, for you?

All is for you. All that we did in the war  
And more.  
Fears in parting. Fears of being afraid.  
Long loneliness. The wireless that played  
His tunes and mine. Letters that didn't come  
No home -  
No hope. Telegrams that we didn't dare  
To open. No-one with whom to share  
The gift of youth and the high song we should have sung  
Together while we were young.

This was our gift to you, our sacrifice  
To keep that light in your eyes.  
That you might live freely, that you might ride and run  
And sit with your knees in the sun.  
That you should have time  
To discover the earth and the mountains therein to climb  
That you and your wife  
Would gaze into your fire and plan your life.

If we can give you that which we have lost,  
It has been worth the cost  
And worth the weary sameness of our days.  
If we can raise  
An ultimate, unchallenged faith for you  
Something to make you of the chosen few  
And lead you, conqueror of every breath  
Unwearying to death.  
If we can frame the clouds for your delight  
And make each night  
A wider conquest for your urgent soul  
Then we have reached our goal  
And know that all our suffering was meant  
And know ourselves Content.

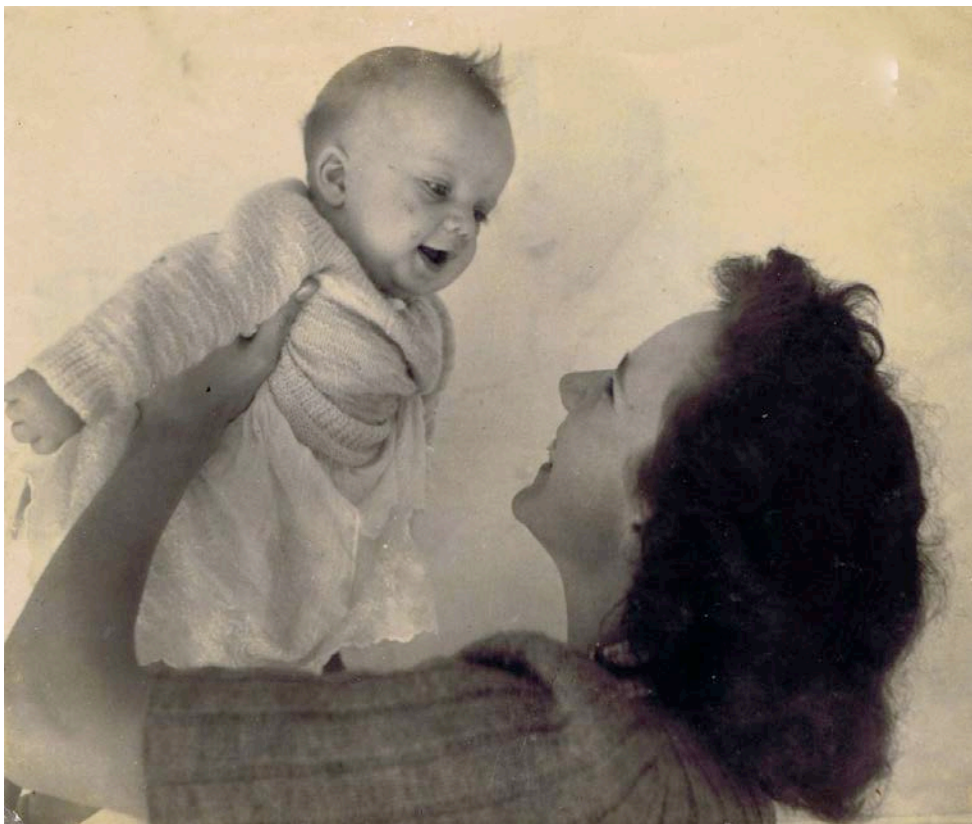
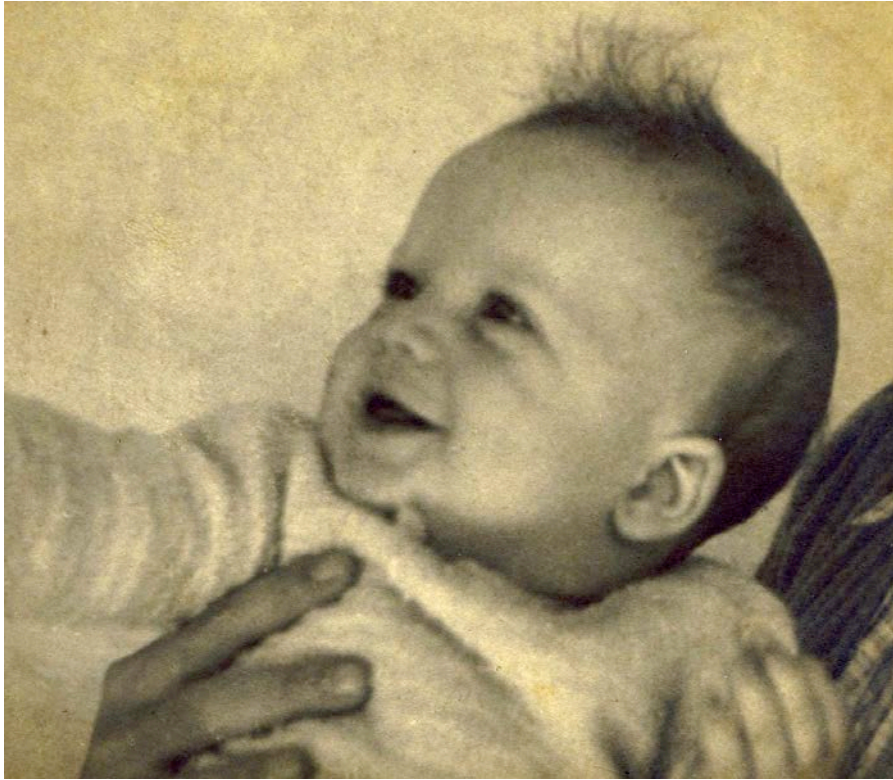
A great deal to live up to!

## ALAN FIRST THREE MONTHS



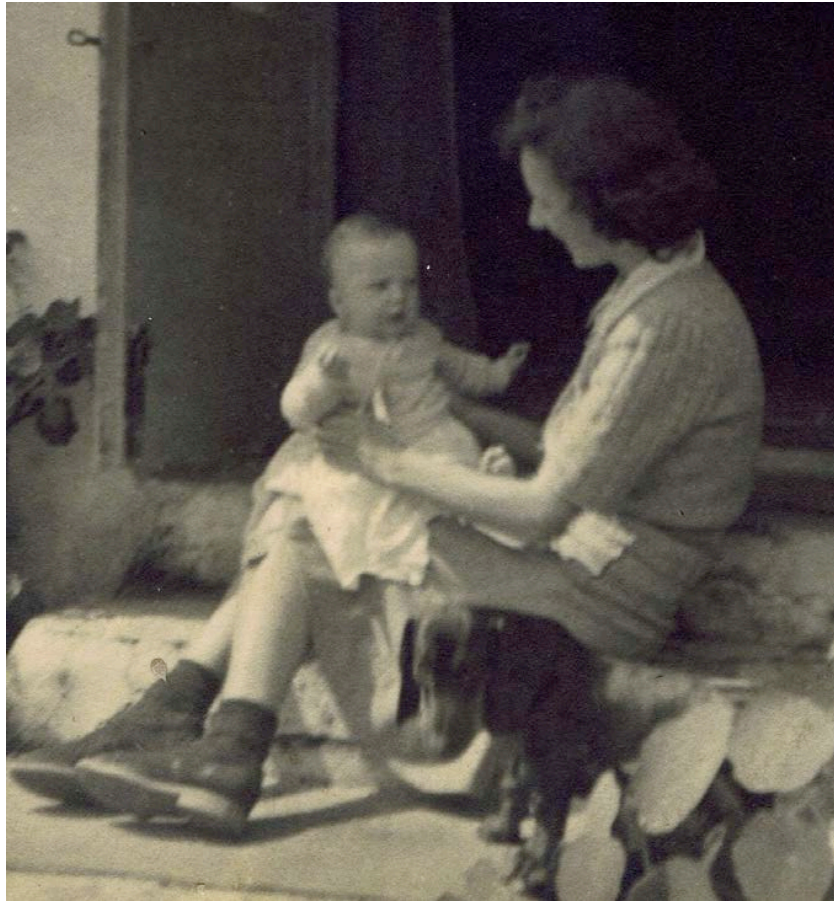




















## 14 HAPPY VALLEY: JANUARY-MAY 1942

The Babies Book has the following entries

Baby received his first toy on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> December 1941 from Lady Ried and Grannie, Woolen Bunny Rabbit and Silver rattle

Baby was brought up on the following diet:

Firstly: Breast-fed until four and a half months, when a little Ostermilk introduced.

Baby's first outing: This important ceremony took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1942. Went to lunch at the Nicholsons. Lay on the sideboard during lunch and was surreptitiously fed. Behaved very well and was much admired. Went there and back in dandy.

Vaccination: Baby was vaccinated on 14<sup>th</sup> day of June at Blyth Cottage, Naini Tal by Dr. Prosser. 'He behaved very nicely - did not even flinch. The doctor drew blood, but the vaccination did not take. He was vaccinated again at 11 months and this time it took and he was feverish for several days.

Baby really laughed for the first time on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June 1942 for Granny

\*

It is not clear when the following poem was written, but it looks as if it was in the months after the birth, so shall put it here.

The fear of illness constantly haunted my mother, which is perhaps not surprising in India during the war at a time when medicine was still a long way from its present state. Her fear is caught in her writings, but is most strongly expressed in a poem she wrote which captures how much she had invested into me. It is not dated, but is headed 'First Sickness'.

You came to me in a cold night of pain.  
To-night is cold; the wind is full of rain.  
My Son, my beloved, fulfillment of life's endeavour,  
I will remember this weeping dark forever.

You are my flesh and they carried you away,  
They said "I think its wiser not to stay".  
What do they know, with their tight, bright, hospital smiles  
Of the journey back through endless misty miles,  
Your lonely cot at home, and all your toys  
Drunkenly disarranged? Do they know the noise  
Of emptiness in a room that you have blessed  
With the laughter of waking and quiet breath of rest?

Do they know the fear in the wind and the sob in the trees  
As I crouch beside my bed upon my knees  
And pray, as a child might. "Oh God, forgive

My wickedness. O God, please let him live."

The wind will drop and maybe I will sleep  
When I have grown too dry of tears to weep.  
Sleep with me little son, the dark will hide us  
And melt the miles that aching divide us.  
Sleep and forget your pain, that I may come  
And hold you to my heart, which is your home.

\*

My mother's later account of these months in the early draft of 'Daughters' is as follows.

'However, I didn't get post puerperal depression, nor was I more than passingly depressed by the news. I only vaguely responded to the disastrous events further east: the fall of Singapore, the sinking of the Prince of Wales and the Reliant. For me, it was mustard coloured stools that mattered, and whether Alan had put on the required four to six ounces a week. I had a book called "Modern Methods of Feeding in Infancy and Early Childhood" which I treated like Holy Writ, and lay awake listening to my starving baby's screams at night because of the page where it said, underlined in black, "on no account give night feeds".

I think of those four months in Happy Valley as an oasis in the long, arid stretch of war that was the first four years of my marriage. Our wooden floors were uncarpeted, and the little furniture we could afford we rented from a Chinaman. The month Alan was born our entire pay packet went on hospital fees, and no month was easy. Yet to run our four-roomed house we had a cook, bearer, sweeper, water carrier, ayah and gardener, the absolute minimum of servants on which one was expected to manage. My part in the running of the house was to sit in front of my desk in the morning, writing in my Memsahib's Account Book. Here in the appropriate columns went the daily cost of sugar, flour, chickens and Vim powder; the latter must have been used for some esoteric rites because we got through several tins a week.

My Ayah was one of the hooded Khasi women; she pattered about on bare brown feet, gentle and spotless, and hung nappies up between the pine tree branches. My book had said that I must get a screen and a table for the bath so a Chinaman made these for me, and I sat and fed Alan for long hours behind the screen, inexpertly so that he had too much or too little and was restless. He grew a little, but not as fast as the book said he should, and my heart sank at every weighing. The advance of the Japanese armies towards our borders worried me less than what the scales would reveal.

And then quite suddenly our pine clad paradise looked like becoming a trap. If the Japanese crossed into India, they would be able to cut us off. For a few weeks we wavered, and then Mac decided to send us away. Perhaps he had some information he couldn't reveal. We told one another that it was just for a while, just until things calmed down. In fact it was four years before we were back, four long, rootless years of trailing about India, waiting for leaves, waiting till the war ended. The sense of suspension, of stagnation, experienced in wartime is impossible to describe. Every sentence began and ended "when it's over" the bit in between aimless and constricted, like being on remand.

The April day we chose to leave Assam was the same one decided on by about a third of its population. I was travelling with Alan in one basket, and a Siamese cat with four



kittens in another, clothes, tins of Ostermilk, and nobody to help me. This seems extraordinary when I think of it now. I was nineteen years old and had a five day journey ahead of me and yet no servant or orderly could be spared to come with me even as far as Calcutta. I suppose we relied on the usual obsequious station master to clear the way for me, lead me to a first class carriage, dust down the seats and lock the door against intruders. That was the usual procedure, but these were unusual events and normality was abandoned. I was just one of thousands fighting my way out of a beleaguered position.

Mac didn't even come with me to the boat, where I crossed the Brahmaputra to reach the railhead. I had to fight my way up the gangway, and then stand jammed to the rails, unable to move for the crowds. A servant passed carrying a tray above his head, and as he fought his way through the press of people I was able to remove the fish from the plate and drop it into the cat's basket. There was no question of feeding Alan, it was all I could do to stop him being trampled underfoot. Off the boat, we were ten deep on the platform waiting for the train. When it pulled in, its doors remained firmly shut. It was already crowded and was obviously going to pull out again quite quickly without taking on any more passengers.

And then a miracle occurred. A white arm, a hand with scarlet glistening nails attached to it, beckoned me from a crack in a window. Somehow I got myself over to the door, and it opened, and I was back in the world I knew: a first class compartment with only one other passenger, a Memsahib with her bister and her case of soda water bottles and her bearer crouching in the lavatory door. I gave no thought to the crowds abandoned on the platform as we slid out. They were used to being treated like this. Like the working classes of my grandmother's time, they would feel perfectly at home on station platforms, refused entry to the last train out.

I was speechless with gratitude to the lady who had let us in, and the cat and I both settled down to feed our offspring. She carrying hers between her teeth under the seat and managing better than I did. In all the heat and stress I had little milk, but this wouldn't be a serious problem as I could get boiling water from the engine to make up a bottle. For the moment Alan was pacified and we sat in a clammy, contented heap in the corner of the carriage and listened while our companion declared what an impossible place India was, and now it talked of Independence, as if it could run itself when it couldn't even run its trains in a civilised manner.

She took a spray from her pigskin vanity case and freshened her face with Eau de Cologne, and then while she ate peaches, peeling them with a silver-handled knife, told me that her husband was a prominent member of Calcutta's business community and would see to it that someone would be hauled over the coals for this disgraceful shambles. When the train pulled in at stations, she pulled down the blinds and closed her eyes wearily at the noise of hammering fists and cries of supplication.

I lifted a corner of the blind at the third station, and then went to let in an English family while she was sighing behind her lowered lids. She was so angry at the presence of two more adults and a child that she withdrew into her corner with her soda water, and refused to share a drop of it with any of us, though she gave a bottle to her bearer. We had to step over him to use the lavatory, which we did as little as possible as it was filthy and waterless.

The couple I had let in allowed me to share their provisions since I had relied on the trays coming through the window. These never appeared, nor was there anyone to go up and get boiling water for bottles and my milk became a tiny trickle. Alan moaned and sweated, but when we reached Calcutta the following evening it was I who was in a state of heat exhaustion, staggering and retching. My companions said I was in no state to travel on as I had intended, and led me and my baskets to a car and drove us all to their flat. Our

haughty fellow traveller was met by a liveried chauffeur and stepped into an enormous limousine, leaving her bearer to find his own way with the crate of soda water.

Alan was given a bottle of milk, I was given iced lime juice and the cat a plate of fish. Then I was laid to rest in an air-conditioned room, and when I woke, I showered and ate steamed chicken and slept again. I can still remember the exquisite sense of relief, physical and mental, and by the morning my milk was back and I was ready to continue my journey. For the next day and night I was provided with a paraffin stove to boil water, which I could do alone in my first class carriage since all the other evacuees had ended their journeys at Calcutta. I never saw the family again but their care of me might well have saved my life.

I thought of that first half of my trip as something exceptional, fearful and unrepeatable. It didn't occur to me that Indians always travelled like that, except that they would be packed solid in their carriages, seven a side on slatted benches. So very long it took me to shake off my Jones assumptions, that the lower classes and the coloured races didn't "feel" things the same way, having simple nervous systems like lobsters.

I went back to my mother in Naini Tal, thinking it would be a short stay, but after I left, Shillong became a closed area to all but military personnel.

\*

## LETTERS

### JANUARY

Letter from Iris to Violet, no 1 Hut, Happy Valley, later January 1942

Darling Mummy,

Thank you very much for your two letters and wire. I didn't mean to worry you so much about Alan. I must have written on the 4<sup>th</sup> day and been growing hysterical as I usually do – quite needlessly as it always turns out. I will try the Magnesia but doubt if it will be strong enough – three good doses of Paraffin is all that affects him and he's getting very cute about medicine and simply spits it out – ditto water which I simply can't get down now. What beats me is that his motions aren't constipated and passed perfectly easily and are very large. I think he'll only get right when he can start taking more exercise. Mrs Deane's baby suffers the same way and she's ringing up the Welsh Mission matron about it so I'll see what her verdict is. Don't you worry though – he's very fit, skin lovely and putting on a regular 5 ozs a week (he's 9lbs 9 and a half ozs now) so there can't be much wrong. He takes a violent interest in everything that's going on, watches everybody's movements intently and can almost reach out for things – he's full of talk and laughter and is really adorable. Mrs Deane's infant is sweet and the image of him, but looks younger at 3 weeks than Alan did at birth and is bright red and puckered. She is supplementary feeding her, at all hours as far as I can see, not well-trained like mine! He doesn't murmur till 6 but as often as not I find him aware when I go through which is a testimony to your Early Training if you like! I've cut his feeds down to about half an hour and he's just as happy but still spills a lot. I'll go on feeding him for 7 or 8 months if I can and wean him slowly, patent are getting more and more scarce apart from anything else and I'm terrified of tummy here. Ayah has settled down a bit and I'm keeping her until I have any more trouble, it's a rotten bunderbust really as the time when I really want her – in the afternoon when I'm resting – she has to have

off. Nathur has departed to settle his affairs, swearing he'll return but I wonder – actually I think he was in rather a mess and as he didn't ask for his fare I couldn't stop him going. Our masalchi is doing bearer and managing very well. As for evacuating myself – I shan't do that until we see which way the Japs are going to turn next. I only hope if I have to come, it won't be the middle of the hot weather.

We still have no wireless. Is Patty coming to you as well as Suzanne? She told me she suspected a baby, I'm so glad. Topsy of course will go quite hay-wire – Naini will be full of gay young Grannies playing bridge together!

Talking of bridge, I've played 3 times now & am beginning to see light & not trump my partners Aces too frequently. Mac & I have beaten the Meinhartts every time. He & Mac were going shooting this week-end but he sprained his ankle walking home from our house last night so it's off. I thought of carting Alan off and going too but the weather is too uncertain to risk fire-less and probably leaking tents. To-day is another wild & stormy one – I knew this would happen directly I packed my thick clothes.

We had a Kuki Puja here last Saturday which was great fun. I enclose the programme in case it amuses you. It started by a long & comic speech from a petrified recruit (he said the Kukis were longing to fight the Japanese as they had been very rude to us!) & the rest was dancing & singing & eating of revolting concoctions with forced smiles, wondering how Alan would like a diluted version! The wretched Kukis presented us with chickens, eggs, cream, vegetables etc & refused to take them back saying we were their father & mother etc. All most embarrassing but we got round it by giving them a whack of rum –which kept them singing for days! The raising date of the 2nd Bn is the 15th & as Mac will probably be Adjutant I shan't see him for dust & am wishing our privacy needn't be disturbed yet awhile. We're planning great things for our garden & the mali is an adept at pinching other people's seedlings. We've eaten some peas & the carrots are nearly ready – if only this incessant gale would stop.

Didn't I tell you I had a wire of congratulations from Granny? It was about a month ago. We had a parcel from Mac's people too including his little knife and fork set. Alan has really grown out of his cot and I must get him another. I've taken him out of very long dresses and petticoats and am going to make him some vests out of that wool-acitex I got myself. The cook's getting a film to-morrow in Shillong so I hope to have some snaps for my next letter. I heard from Billy the other day but no indication of where he is. Also Richard who was still uncertain of getting a commission. I wonder when he'll arrive. Thank you for your hint re E.C – most subtle! I've dropped my pen & bent the nib so excuse scrawl.

Please don't worry about Alan – I won't let him go too far. Will get that stuff you mentioned.

I've just had another invitation to a binge in the lines. I've asked everybody several times how many children they've got so will be quite devoid of conversation henceforth!

Heaps of love from us all to the family – Iris

## MARCH

About 3 March 1942 No 1 Hut, Happy Valley

Darling Mummy,

Thank you very much for your letter & the enlargement – it is awfully sweet. When you've finished with the negative might I borrow it for a bit? It doesn't feel as if we've been married a whole year – and yet I can hardly remember not having a husband! We celebrated on Saturday by having supper at the club & Mac has given me the most

adorable set for our writing desk (very superior baize-topped affair pinched from his M.I. room). It's a Kalimpong one in the same green as our trays etc. You wouldn't recognise our drawing room now - we've had a final re-organisation & made it look charming. The garden too is pretty marvellous. All flattened out with a row of circular beds and the sweet-pea are continued all round. We've had arty little stone walls built & employed another mali, about as mud-unto-mud as the other but more energetic.

I've suddenly become super enthusiastic & spend most of my morning grovelling. The cabbages which were eaten seem to be making an attempt to grow again & the peas are forming pods in all directions.

You'll be surprised to hear I played Bridge last evening - the Meinhardts are keen & quite good & we took them on - I made some pretty dreadful blobs but wasn't quite as paralytic as I'd feared. I had miserable cards - one hand I had 7 clubs to the Jack & 6 diamonds to the Queen & Mac went soaring up in no trumps! They're a nice couple - young & agreeable - & it's a blessing having them now that everyone else has gone. Our C.O. in due to arrive any moment - there are rumours that he came from the 6th Gurkhas but I think they originated with Barua. I've no idea where he'll stay.

Alan is bouncing with health and spirits and is very good on the whole - this morning is an exception for some reason, I don't think he can find his thumb! He put on 6 ozs last week and 4 this and is getting very long in the leg. Chilumchi has sent him a sweet silver mug. I'm having trouble with the Ayah who according to the other servants pinches my sugar and tea and spends her time cadging in the cook house - if I speak to her she flies off the handle and sulks for the rest of the day and I'm getting a bit fed up. She's good with him but I can't cope with her touchiness. In fact I'm in the thick of Servant Trouble.

Nathu's family keep wining that they're all dangerously ill & will probably wear him down in the end, & the Choras?? All want to go to their homes - its all panic of course but most tedious. They really are a spineless collection & I shall sack the whole lot & wash my own dishes if I have much more trouble! The news is hardly cheering but I don't think there's any need to contemplate flight yet. We're fed up with Thet Singh as he won't put our wireless & charges us 5/- a time to change batteries & their never does it properly so we have to have it done every few days. What a country - I think the domestic chaos has upset my milk as he's been very fretful to-day and doesn't seem to get much though I know its there. However it'll all blow over no doubt! We're having peculiar weather of fierce torrential rain & thunder & hail - I feel perhaps it might be an Act of God to flood the countryside for the Japs but it certainly isn't helpful for our poor little seedlings. We were supposed to be walking into Shillong to-day & I was going to try & get your knitting bag & a film for the camera - don't lose heart though - it will arrive eventually! I was very glad Margo had a son as she wanted one so badly - he ought to have been a 9 pounder at lest. We had a letter from Mac's brother the other day, he's trying for the Navy. Did Desmond ever get in by the way?

We have some lads from Rangoon in Shillong & they're apparently in a pitiful state of nerves due to dive-bombing literally all of a tremble. To crown everything we haven't had a paper for 3 days so our news has to be second-hand & distorted this letter seems full of grumbles, probably liver from having to be in all day - "it never rains but it pours!" Couldn't you tell me in code where Command has gone?! Mac doesn't know but suggests where Cynthia & Pat went on their honeymoon but I said that wouldn't be any more helpful. Do hope you won't have to move.

Heaps of love from us all to you both & Uncle Robert - Iris

P.S. Have got some suppositories. Do you put the whole thing up or just a bit like a Soap stick?'

Happy Valley Shillong. mid-March 1942

Darling Mummy,

Thank you very much for your letter – ours seem to be crossing. I'm afraid I don't write as often as I'd like but I find I feed Alan most of the day and in between have to try and exercise myself and vaguely run the house – its 12 now and I've sat down for the first time. Heaven help the mother of twins! Alan is thrilled with all Uncle Robert's letters and laughed for ages over the Card – please thank him very much. He put on 8 and a half ozs last week (my weighing so perhaps not strictly accurate, but near enough) and is looking very fat and lively. He sleeps almost too well now and its often 6.30 before any of us stir which rather puts us out in our schedule but no doubt the extra sleep does him good and definitely does us! His tummy is still erratic – his last effort was after nearly five days and I was getting frantic and contemplating enemas but it was quite normal eventually – so what? He is very good and so chatty and full of fun – quite a different baby to the one you knew and I'm getting more thrilled with him every day. He's been promoted to the big bath and looks like a little shrimp and takes it terribly seriously.

We're on top of the world as we've heard we'll have to stay on here instead of moving to Elephant Falls – result is we're gardening madly and planning impossible hedges and terraces etc in our zeal. The 7th are far from pleased as we shall take over their mess which they've embroidered with all their own regimental riff-raff & also the cause which they're using. It's a tremendous relief to us though.

Colonel Williams is off – very sad & she is naturally upset after having spent so much time & money on the house – we shall miss them awfully. The Morrisses are also going next month, he overseas – Mrs Lindsay Smith has gone to join her husband prior to his leaving & Mrs Deane's in hospital (she had a daughter day before yesterday) so we're high & dry again for the moment. Someone called Macleod is coming to command the 2nd – we know nothing about him but I believe he's an A.H.Q – wallahs like dear Ross – there the resemblance ends I hope! Mac is not putting up for Staff College this – I don't think he wants to miss any chance of active service which might come his way in this part of the world and in any case is interested in the thought of raising a new Bn. Also he's working for his Higher Urdu which he wants to pass before he dares ask for S.C.! The June course would be rather a trial in the way of travelling. Personally I'm glad of the thought of a hot-weather here and continuing this settled existence of ours. I feel so fit & happy. Of course one doesn't feel over settled with the news as it is and there is a lot of depressing defeatist talk going about which doesn't help and will lead to panicking if anything does happen – it is mostly from useless abandoned women who ought to be getting down to helping instead of discussing when we shall get our first Air Raid – it really makes me tired. Naini sounds far more enterprising and prepared. The latest and most brilliant theory is that the Japs won't bomb Shillong as they'll use it as a health resort when they're in Calcutta. Our wireless has been out of order for the past fortnight & they simply won't find out what's wrong – infuriating just now.

We're still having a beat-up every Saturday night and get later and later coming back but Alan never worries. Last time the Gurkhas had given a farewell cum binge to Williams and were all feeling on top of the world – one of them went up to a very super white-haired General (Macdonald) & told him he was an old playboy – the General was too astonished to answer even! He steered an uneven course round the floor with Mrs Williams and then confided in Williams (his C.O.) that he'd said he'd get her & he



had! He eventually retired to the reading room and was last seen reading Punch upside down – the next day he remembered nothing at all! Your friend Johnson was there & liked him a lot & he told me at intervals throughout the evening he he'd enjoyed his bridge with you.

Just got your letter – thank you so much. I have been cutting A's feed times down a bit since I wrote and he doesn't appear to mind – he spills quite a lot but I don't think you'd call it sickness. Have also been massaging his tummy. Mrs Dinhelderins baby sounds as if its being overfed – did you suggest the Castor Oil remedy? How strange Naini will be without Command or Civil – just a mass of women. I hope you don't get moved as I'm afraid I'm relying on you in an emergency but we can fit into a tiny space. I shall stay until the last possible moment, but I suppose for Alan's sake I should have to go if things get really hot.

I wonder if you'd be annoyed if I handed Ling over to the Meinhardtts? I feel that if the worst happens I couldn't cope with so many animals etc on a journey & they're very keen to have her & adore animals – she'd be so close that it wont be a real separation. She has to be tied up so much here as she spends her time pulling the baby's clothes off the line and strewing them round the garden and Ayah's getting a bit frantic! I really think she'd get more freedom there and though she's a sweet little thing she is rather a handful with a baby about. I was terribly upset about Soly – poor little thing, I hope it was over quickly. Anyway I'm glad it wasn't my old Fatty.

We had quite a full-blown earthquake the other morning – I was feeding Alan and when the house began to rock leapt up and started to dash outside but was restrained by Mac who has apparently been in Mexican ones and knows – when it and I had eventually calmed down I found Alan still sucking placidly having clung on bravely throughout the turmoil. You'd have been half-way to Shillong I should think, it was quite sick-making.

Our lettuces have started to flower & have never been really edible – they tasted like grass. We're going to try them cooked. Peas are forming pods & carrots-cum-larkyspurs also doing nicely. The loony Mali is working for the Mess now & probably supplying them with a lot of our seedlings!

Well I must stop for now & feed myself before I start on him again!

Heaps of love to you all from us all – Iris

P.S. Haven't forgotten your knitting bag but so far haven't been able to get in. Am going this week I think.

## APRIL

No. 1 Happy Valley, prob. about 25-27 April 1942

Darling Mummy,

It ages since I heard from you but I expect you've been very busy & letters are taking about 5 weeks to reach here from Calcutta alone so can't imagine how long from Naini. I hope the hope the parcel arrived safely. I enclose some snaps of Alan – not very good still and rottenly developed but they will give you an idea of his size – it's a pity my face has to be so prominent always. We're trying an enlargement of him smiling and I'll send it along if its good. He looks like a little picanniny in one doesn't he? They don't do him proper justice because you cant see his lovely skin and blue yes and his hair is a goldy brown like Macs. He's getting very wicked these days and wants to be awake all day and played with and can be a little fiend! He can roll over from his tummy to his back and nearly right over again and is intrigued with the world that is beginning to

unfold itself – in his bath he grabs his knee and digs his nails into it and then looks hurt and surprised! His tummy is a little better so perhaps the olive oil is the solution. I am a little worried about his food as he seems to dry me up in about 10 minutes – I got him some “Ostermilk” but he won’t take it, in fact thinks a bottle is a form of amusement and smiles politely but won’t suck and spits out what he does. I’m not worrying while he continues to put on weight but don’t know what to wean him onto eventually.

There’s nothing of violent interest to report from here – we have planes going over every day and lots of sirens afterwards, but I imagine they’re carrying evacuees mostly. Mac is working all day till 5 and then plays some violent game and by the end of it all is too tired to move or think. He loves it of course but I sometimes long for those lazy days of the “T” Coy! The lads we have here are awfully nice, and are all qualified in strange subjects like Birds & Modern Languages & Plant Life – they go off for long treks & bring back vast quantities of bugs & butterflies & of course find this country absolute heaven. I have even got quite keen & crawl through the undergrowth after hairy caterpillars for them – Mac frustrates me usually by letting them loose from match boxes & cigarette tins & the bungalow is seething with them. We’ve been having the queerest weather – a week of howling winds, then 4 days tropical heat & now it’s cold & wet & I’ve got to unpack my warm clothes for the umpteenth time. The place is full of cuckoos, isn’t it odd? It makes me homesick. Our garden is beginning to look like one. All the larkspur are out & the cauliflowers & snapdragons just starting. The second lot of peas we planted are huge but no beans as yet. We have put turf round all the beds & the effect is definitely artistic.

27<sup>th</sup> Have just got your letter – it took 7 days. I’m glad you agree about me staying – actually it was only a momentary spasm that made me think of coming, when Barua told us about the small gauge. It is not bombs I’m afraid of – I don’t feel they’ll waste many on Shillong somehow – but the awful chaos there might be if we are evacuated. However as you say things seem a little brighter and my moment of panic has quite passed. How awful for that Mrs McAllum, Burma has produced frightful tragedies everywhere – there are people here who left absolutely all except what they stood up in & sometimes their husbands. I see Brian North got an M.C. but it didn’t say posthumously? Briggs too has done well hasn’t he?

My brat, bless him, has now gone to the other extreme and got a slight tummy upset. Its probably “Ostermilk”, or me eating too much rhubarb! You seem to be getting on very fast with shorthand – I don’t remember putting words together for ages. “Iris” is downward “v” don’t forget [two squiggles] I had a letter from Mrs Howman the other day – Ross has been very ill with antrim?? Malaria. Oh. Very important. I called & made a slam at bridge the other day! Lady Reid has asked me to be on the Committee of the Lady Hardinge Linen League – have no idea what it implies but suspect I have to supply Assam poor with pillow-cases or something.

Bye-bye & all love from the three of us – Iris

## MAY

Letter from Iris to Violet, Happy Valley, 6<sup>th</sup> May 1942

Darling Mummy,

What a day – Alan has had prickly heat, Belinda kittens and we our marching orders and I’ve been running round madly trying to pack and soothe the crying baby and midwife the cat all at once my head is going round and round. Just to finish it all off it is

our Bridge Night to-night and I shall be utterly unable to concentrate or count trumps or any of the other things I find it hard enough to do at the best of times. However!

We're going to Elephant Falls after all – such fun, one can't even get taxis there and it's permanently raining, not to mention unstained floors and the other joys of hut life which you know too well! It breaks our hearts to leave our garden now, which is getting so pretty and our vegetables all on the verge of being eatable – besides I love this place and we've been so happy here. But we're lucky to be together at all and in a cool spot so I mustn't grouse too much. Also it has forced me to really get down to packing which I've been dabbling at very ineffectively for the past fortnight. I'm packing away all but the bare essentials and not going to open the boxes again. I think if I come I'll bring a box of linen and silver as I've a horrid feeling I shan't see again what I leave in Shillong. Mrs Deane is staying till she thinks it's hopeless so I can travel with her. She was thrilled to hear of accommodation in Naini as her mother-in-law is an evacuee here and they had despaired of a hill station. You'll probably hear from her. Nathu of course is not returning & my temporary bearer has gone too so I'm without – it's quite easy ordinarily but packing the house up too is a bit of a burden. Very good for me I tell myself at intervals & think hard about what Some People are Going Through. Actually, I have about a week to do it in so it's not so bad...

Belinda has produced 3 litters (the 4th, an enormous one, was dead) in Mac's bed of all places! She started at lunch time & I spread a clean towel under her which offended her so she took herself off into Mac's bed. Not one of them is Siamese – one black & white, black white & brown & just black. Very disappointing. Mac swore he would drown them but when it came to the point said don't be so silly how could he kill an animal so they're still alive! I'm sure someone will take them.

Herewith the enlargement I promised – very badly done but rather sweet. Poor lamb, he has had prickly heat all over his back though it isn't terrifically hot. I'm having to give a little supplementary at most feeds now and the "Osternilk" seems to suit him and has regulated his insides. He is absolutely adorable and trying very hard to sit up – once propped up he can stay there by himself for several minutes before gracefully toppling over to one side. We took more snaps to-day. This is the next day and I walked into Shillong this morning and am feeling a trifle part-worn – it was sizzling and we went a much longer way landing up the other end of Shillong and having to walk miles to the shops.

Your letter to Mac has just arrived with the cheques – really you shouldn't have sent them as things are just as expensive for you, but thank you very much – we will keep them until we see what's what but whether I have to use them to travel or not we will pay them back just as soon as we can. It was sweet of you to send them and will help us out if there's an emergency. Squadrons of planes go over daily – American I think. Apparently they might land paratroops here but will get a warmish welcome.

Must stop & do the million things I have to – Belinda broke most of the crockery I left out this morning so I've got to unpack my yesterday handiwork to replace it. The joys of home life!

Heaps of love from all, - Iris

## 15 NAINI TAL: MAY-JUNE 1942

My mother's account in the early draft of 'Daughters' is as follows:

The April day [in fact late May] we chose to leave Assam was the same one decided on by about a third of its population. I was travelling with Alan in one basket, and a Siamese cat with four kittens in another, clothes, tins of Ostermilk, and nobody to help me. This seems extraordinary when I think of it now. I was nineteen years old and had a five day journey ahead of me and yet no servant or orderly could be spared to come with me even as far as Calcutta. I suppose we relied on the usual obsequious station master to clear the way for me, lead me to a first class carriage, dust down the seats and lock the door against intruders. That was the usual procedure, but these were unusual events and normality was abandoned. I was just one of thousands fighting my way out of a beleaguered position.

Mac didn't even come with me to the boat, where I crossed the Brahmaputra to reach the railhead. I had to fight my way up the gangway, and then stand jammed to the rails, unable to move for the crowds. A servant passed carrying a tray above his head, and as he fought his way through the press of people I was able to remove the fish from the plate and drop it into the cat's basket. There was no question of feeding Alan, it was all I could do to stop him being trampled underfoot. Off the boat, we were ten deep on the platform waiting for the train. When it pulled in, its doors remained firmly shut. It was already crowded and was obviously going to pull out again quite quickly without taking on any more passengers.

And then a miracle occurred. A white arm, a hand with scarlet glistening nails attached to it, beckoned me from a crack in a window. Somehow I got myself over to the door, and it opened, and I was back in the world I knew: a first class compartment with only one other passenger, a Memsahib with her bister and her case of soda water bottles and her bearer crouching in the lavatory door. I gave no thought to the crowds abandoned on the platform as we slid out. They were used to being treated like this. Like the working classes of my grandmother's time, they would feel perfectly at home on station platforms, refused entry to the last train out.

I was speechless with gratitude to the lady who had let us in, and the cat and I both settled down to feed our offspring. She carrying hers between her teeth under the seat and managing better than I did. In all the heat and stress I had little milk, but this wouldn't be a serious problem as I could get boiling water from the engine to make up a bottle. For the moment Alan was pacified and we sat in a clammy, contented heap in the corner of the carriage and listened while our companion declared what an impossible place India was, and now it talked of Independence, as if it could run itself when it couldn't even run its trains in a civilised manner.

She took a spray from her pigskin vanity case and freshened her face with Eau de Cologne, and then while she ate peaches, peeling them with a silver-handled knife, told me that her husband was a prominent member of Calcutta's business community and would see to it that someone would be hauled over the coals for this disgraceful shambles. When the train pulled in at stations, she pulled down the blinds and closed her eyes wearily at the noise of hammering fists and cries of supplication.

I lifted a corner of the blind at the third station, and then went to let in an English family while she was sighing behind her lowered lids. She was so angry at the presence of two more adults and a child that she withdrew into her corner with her soda water, and refused to share a drop of it with any of us, though she gave a bottle to her bearer. We had to step over him to use the lavatory, which we did as little as possible as it was filthy and waterless.

The couple I had let in allowed me to share their provisions since I had relied on the trays coming through the window. These never appeared, nor was there anyone to go up and get boiling water for bottles and my milk became a tiny trickle. Alan moaned and sweated, but when we reached Calcutta the following evening it was I who was in a state of heat exhaustion, staggering and retching. My companions said I was in no state to travel on as I had intended, and led me and my baskets to a car and drove us all to their flat. Our haughty fellow traveller was met by a liveried chauffeur and stepped into an enormous limousine, leaving her bearer to find his own way with the crate of soda water.

Alan was given a bottle of milk, I was given iced lime juice and the cat a plate of fish. Then I was laid to rest in an air-conditioned room, and when I woke, I showered and ate steamed chicken and slept again. I can still remember the exquisite sense of relief, physical and mental, and by the morning my milk was back and I was ready to continue my journey. For the next day and night I was provided with a paraffin stove to boil water, which I could do alone in my first class carriage since all the other evacuees had ended their journeys at Calcutta. I never saw the family again but their care of me might well have saved my life.

I thought of that first half of my trip as something exceptional, fearful and unrepeatable. It didn't occur to me that Indians always travelled like that, except that they would be packed solid in their carriages, seven a side on slatted benches. So very long it took me to shake off my Jones assumptions, that the lower classes and the coloured races didn't "feel" things the same way, having simple nervous systems like lobsters.

I went back to my mother in Naini Tal, thinking it would be a short stay, but after I left, Shillong became a closed area to all but military personnel.

## LETTERS

### Mac to Iris

21 May 1942 Office 2nd B A Regt

My darling,

By the time you get this you will be in Naini and more or less settled down. I hope sweet that everything went alright and there were no hitches.

It has been simply terrible here, I simply mope around our little house. It is extraordinary the memories it brings back. Alan's room and our little room all bleak and bare. Still our "Leslie" has moved in next door and seems quite happy and getting frightfully confidential. Funny, other evening was playing "Ave Maria" and our 'Leslie' came rushing in and asked what beautiful hymn Deanna Durbin was singing? I don't know when I shall simply blow up and scream the place down.

I am gradually getting things packed up. I am afraid I am not being as tidy and neat as you would darling. I just got the tin box in and just put anything in that came to hand.

The 'Aya' and 'chokna' according to the cook ransacked the house before they left and before I got back. I have not found anything missing as yet but shall have no hesitation in informing the police if I do. Not easy to check up actually.

Mess life is not too bad but darling I have to dress I can't have any nice evenings by the fire. It makes me wild to think that those little "Yellow Skunks" can do this. It is just one more score I have to settle with them when I can near them.

I am writing this in the office between intervals hence the splodges etc. Andy has just been in to say he would like to give a lecture on the 2nd Phase of his life!! And challenged me to a game of billiards on Saturday. Shall I go sweetheart or would you be



very annoyed. Believe it does take my mind off the fact that you are away because I get frightfully morbid if I am alone and thinking about you and "Fatty Boy." Anyway I must get out of this blasted mess sometimes.

I have thought of a wonderful scheme about my leave. As I told you I was going to take some in a few months time. Well actually I am not going to tell you when I am coming. One day I shall just walk in the door and then! So you can really expect me every day.

Sweetheart I have just returned from another interruption and I have just realised that I have not told you I love you or anything.

You do believe when I do say it don't you darling. I know you think I don't sometimes. It is I sweetheart because I am never really happy unless you are near me. You have no idea how proud I am of you and Alan.

There comes the C.O. and so to work. I must shut down. I shall be writing again shortly. I have written to your mother thanking her for the money. Will you please thank her again and say that we shall repay it shortly.

All the love in the world sweetheart and to my little "Fatty Boy".

Remember the phone call week Friday. That is 29th May. Xxxxxx Mac  
My love to the family and tell Robert that Alan will act as my 2<sup>nd</sup> if he wants a scrap!

No date - 22?? May 1942

My darling,

No word of you yet. I hope darling everything went O.K. I am expecting a letter from you any time now. I am being very good aren't I darling. This is the third in less than a week. To think you have been away for a whole week. It seems absolutely months sweetheart and the more it is the more I want you back sweetheart. You have no idea how lonely and moody I am getting. Awful livers in the morning. I think that most of blokes wish you were back.

What a beginning. Very depressing but there you are daring that is the way I feel.

I went to the Club on Saturday and beat 'Andy' at billiards much to his disgust and he attributes the fact to the 2nd Phase of his life. 'Pop Eye' was at the club and was most disappointed you were not there and that he did not see you. His hair is shorter than ever now. Real Gurkha. All the women have left practically. Mrs Deane is still here and is leaving when that lot all leave, if you see what I mean. Somebody walked up to me in the club and said that he heard you and I had both left Shillong. Just shows what gets round.

We played the 7 G.R.C. at Football yesterday. By we I mean BO's only. I had a frightful experience. Another fellow called Kelly of the 7 GRC and myself both ran for the ball at the same time and both kicked at the same time. Our shin bones connected and I am afraid Kelly broke his leg. He was very good about [it] and I am going into hospital this evening to see him. I am afraid I was very cut up about it. But of course it might have happened to anybody really. Thank goodness it wasn't me. Only don't worry darling as I said nothing could ever happen to me. Touch wood!

We continued the game and won 2-0. Afterwards we invited them to the mess and had a jolly evening on Tea and biscuits. We have not got a single drink in the mess (alcoholic I mean)! They are a grand set of blokes the 7th. Twenty times better than the 10th GRC. Funny thing too is that the 7th hate the 10th.

Terrible scribble all this darling but I want to catch the post. Honestly the orderly is waiting outside.

Write to me sweetheart. Nice long letter like you usually do and tell me all about your journey etc.

My love to the family and one huge kiss and hug for my 'Fatty Boy'.

All the love in the world to you my sweetheart. And remember Friday night if this gets there before then. I love you I love you I love you xxxxxx Mac

Don't forget the bank??

I have practically finished his registration.

23 May 1942

My darling,

Just received your wire from Calcutta. I am afraid I was getting rather worried. What actually happened that made you stay in Calcutta. I suppose the beastly train was late. Darling I am so sorry that you had all that trouble. I think now that I should have definitely come with you as far as Calcutta anyway. Who were the friends you stayed with and what happened to Meinhardts? Here I am asking all sorts of questions and I haven't said a word about you. How is Alan? Little Fatty. It is really awful these days I have no one to put my arms round, no fat cheeks to kiss or flappy ears to chew! Really awful state of affairs. You wait, when I come on leave, both Alan and you better hide for a while.

Nothing much happening here. The Mess is still a bit quiet. Last night, although I know you won't believe a word of this, I was making conversation left right and centre and not a [person] would back me up. I kept saying something and laughing like a hyena, at my own jokes. May be that was what put them off. The C.O. has got in tow with some women and I think he thinks about her a lot because all he does nowadays is to sit in the corner and mumble "Gin".

I have a new stunt with the gramophone now (I don't know why I am jumping from subject to subject for), I put it on a mohrer and carry it from room to room, even into the bathroom where I spend most of my time wallowing madly in a large tub by myself. Extraordinary really. I did not know that bath was quite as large as it is!

I haven't got rid of the bearer as yet but I am looking for one. Very difficult getting one just now as people are flocking away from Shillong. Bazar has practically closed down. I don't know what we shall do shortly. Go on to Field Rations I suppose.

I am going to the flicks this evening to see "Western Union" with the lads and then play Andy at billiards afterwards. I wish you were here darling. You haven't any idea how much I liked taking you to the club and showing you to everybody. Anyway it won't be long we shall be dancing together again in Naini. Keep your little chin up sweetheart and give my little Fatty a kiss (big one). Please send me some photos of you both.

My love to the family and all the love & kisses in the world to you my darling xxxx Mac

PS. Please see the Naini Imperial Bank about my letter. I shall send a reminder.

27 May 1942 Mac to Iris

Darling,

I have received the bank forms enclosed herewith. Will you take them to the bank as soon as possible and put your name in the place I have marked. I will let this letter go two or three days ahead and then transfer Rs 300/- to Naini Bank for you cash when

you want to. From 1st July I am sending Rs 450/- a month from my pay and increase that once we get all square.

I have not heard a word from you yet darling. Whether you have arrived in Naini or not I mean. Sweetheart nothing went wrong did it. How did "Fatty Boy" behave. I bet he is getting frightfully spoilt just now with all the S.Bs. Lucky Boy.

Whoopee just received a wire to say that you had both arrived in Naini. It has taken four days by express. I am so pleased you have arrived alright darling because I was getting rather worried. Do write and tell me all about it. I am looking forward to Friday. I hope I can get through to you alright. I have already written down what I am going to say. I have timed it for 1 1/2 minutes and then I am going to make you speak. Remember I want to hear Alan if you don't bring him this time then speak him squeak the next.

Things here all quiet and you could still have been here without anything happening although nearly all women have left as I told you before. (Blast the C.O. keeps wandering in and out of the office can't get any peace at all.) Here He comes again.

Sorry darling things are bit quieter now. I have just heard a lecture from a fellow who used to be a commando and he described a raid on the French coast. They must be tough blokes with absolutely no scruples at all. Kill Germans as if they were flies.

Andy has fixed some bundobust for me and Charles Stonor and himself of course to go out to dinner and have some haggis. One of his Scotch pals. It should be quite good. I love a haggis as you know.

No I cannot get peace to write this so I must leave you darling and I will write tomorrow in a far better frame of mind.

All my love sweetheart and to my little boy.

Xxxxxxx Mac

I love you, I love you, I love you 'Fatty'

30 May 1942

My darling,

Trying to phone up last night was a failure. I started phoning at about 9.15 and at 11.000 the phone operator told me that owing to the huge amount of calls being made I should have to wait all night. Darling I was so looking forward to speaking to you. What we shall do next time is that early in the morning I shall book the call and then maybe sometime in the afternoon I shall get through. If this letter gets through in time I shall try that next Friday. I do hope I can speak to you darling. I am getting frightfully depressed these days. I am missing you terribly, and things here are getting worse and worse really. Nothing to do except sit in and do some office work. No excitement at all.

To keep the mess going at night Andy and I have silly arguments about nothing at all but you ought to see the way people grab at them to relieve the monotony. They simply won't talk. The old C.O. loves talking about anything. Andy & I have got to the stage where we pull his leg about his "Club Doings". He simply loves it too.

I have got rid of the old cook who was doing bearer and got another. I am afraid he will have to go soon if he does not improve. Very difficult to get servants these days. I have Lima Ao as my orderly. He is a grand little fellow. Plays the piano all day and whats more important makes a grand job of my boots.

How is 'Fatty Boy' darling. Please send me some photos of yourself and him. Remember darling I want one of you. A big one I mean. I shall get one done of myself if you get one of yourself. It should be easy in Naini. You must though. I have no big one of you.

I have not received a letter from you yet so I don't know sweetheart how you fared on the journey or who you must have stayed with. I meant to ask you that last night. I am not going out tonight Saturday but am going to the Golf Club house tomorrow to have a battle royal with the blokes. Andy and myself against Barua and Cooksey.

Well darling I am feeling depressed and I want you here sweetheart to help me. Somebody's ear I can chew. It is funny how much one person can effect another. It makes me happy yet depressed because I must walk back to the bungalow and not find you there asleep or Fatty Gurgling. Someday though there will only be you and I and Fatty in a little white cottage somewhere near the sea. We will have porridge and herrings for breakfast and each have a huge glass of milk. Someday. All the love in the world darling. Keep thinking of me. Kiss Alan for me. Love to all Donald

Got a letter from Mother dated Feb 2. Taken nearly 4 months to get here. Am forwarding it to you. D.

## **JUNE (and possibly some July)**

### **Iris to Mac**

- many of these letters are badly damaged, incomplete and most without dates, thus this is a very rough order

incomplete, no date

A fiasco, as I thought Mrs. C. lived somewhere she didn't & never got to where she did. However I have a letter from you darling. I'm sorry you can't definitely say about leave yet but I'm still hoping & banking on this month.

Darling your moustache sounds horribly dashing & gigolo-ish - fancy its glittering - honestly I don't trust it an inch. Does it do tricks? You ought to train it to stand up for "God save the King" or something interesting. You can keep it till I see you & if it has a devastating effect on me you'll have it off at once in view of other women having similar reactions!

Yes, I read 'Rogue Herries' & 'Judith Parris' ages ago & love them only being about 12 at the time I was rather shocked at parts. Are they shocking? I don't expect so! 'Vanessa' & 'The Fortress' are continuations about the same family so you must read those too. I've just read 'The Patriot' by Pearl Buck - very good - all about Japan & China at the beginning of this war, Chiang Ka Shek etc.

I can't get the photographer to finish my photos in spite of using all the language you've taught me. I hope the other one arrived safely.

Sorry for a dull letter but I really have done nothing since I last wrote darling.

I love you & so does Fatty & we're both longing to see you sweetheart -

Hugs & kisses - Totty

c. mid June 1942 (Alan almost 6 months old)

[first page missing]

sick leave so she's frightfully thrilled. People are dying like flies of malaria & heat stroke down below but they can't make up their minds quite where to put them here, though there are several places going. It does seem silly.

I played Bridge all day yesterday & felt very wuzzy as a result. I am improving though darling & occasionally make my contract. I called a slam once, but we didn't make it. I had all hearts & diamonds & my partner all clubs & spades with the result that I couldn't get into her hand even. There are quite a lot of averagely bad people here so I'm getting rid of my ghastly inferiority complex & actually enjoy playing a hand now. It's quite an amusing way of passing an evening, but won't play in the morning again. I was thumping my partners aces all night.

Fatty's big grown up cot has arrived and is very smart – the mattress will be ready in a few days and he'll be so smart. He is nearly 6 months old – isn't it amazing. His laugh, darling, is the loveliest thing I've ever heard – peals and peals of giggles that make me howl myself. His vaccination hasn't taken yet but I expect it will in a few days.

Poor Belinda – her last kitten went yesterday & she is desolate & bursting with milk – I can sympathise fully, but don't know what to do about it! This afternoon we're going to tea with someone who has Siamese cats so will all tell each other wonderfully improbable stories about what our animals do that no other cats have ever been known to.

Had a terrific gaggle at the Work Party this morning, darling! Patty & I advising all the girls how to catch husbands & keep them! There are lots of lovelies here this year, thank goodness I'm out of the running & can look on in a vague, motherly way with Alan's knitting under one arm!

Later. The post has come & still no letter so I'm swelling furiously. I'm feeling exhausted, having rushed about all day in the heat & dust & just got Alan off to sleep after a lot of trouble. And I've got my usual Evening Depression – I rush about all day & can't think but in the evening comes the reaction – oh hell take everything. Billy is getting leave I believe, so why can't you? I don't follow.

Anyway I'll spare you further moans & groans for now. I met both the Porters?? to-day who asked after you. Just the same as ever.

Don't give up writing often darlingest.

We both send our love and kisses & are always thinking about you.

Hugs darling – Totty

P.S. You have never written to Mummy. Do try remember to – thanking her for the money.

?mid June 1942

Darling, At last a letter – I hadn't heard for 5 days & was speechless with fury & planning a really crushing wire when I got one which I had to pay 1 As for – but it was Worth it. Don't ever put me through such torture again darling!

So glad the C.O. is agreeable about leave – but only a month would be worth while wouldn't it? If you couldn't get that I could come to Calcutta or somewhere. I still think the course idea is best if you could wangle it. Darling my birthday is July 22<sup>nd</sup> – that's why I particularly want you then. Richard arrives on 21<sup>st</sup> and I'd like the christening on my birthday so work like mad and prey on everyone's finer feelings. As a matter of fact I'm on the verge of a nervous breakdown – will definitely collapse completely unless you save me. Tell the C.O. so with my love. I'm backing everything on you coming.

Actually I have been feeling mouldy to-day – woke up feeling sick & dizzy & spent the morning in bed, but I feel better again now. Suzanne is in bed with an unknown disease – in fact a lot of people are. I think it's the queer weather we're having. I went up for a second examination and took Fatty to the hospital to be weighed, yesterday. He is 14lbs 1 oz – not heavy really, but shows a steady gain. I know all the mothers with

huge babies continually complain of tummy upsets. By the way darling he has authoritatively been stated, on 2 different occasions, to have said "Mum-mum" Gentcha! And I've been drumming "Da-da" into him too. Most odd! Of course if you send a picture of yourself it would be a lot easier, in fact I think it would solve everything. Hurry please darling. [rest missing]

?mid June or early July 1942

Darlingest - I suppose you're very busy moving to Elephant Falls as I haven't heard for 3 days again. I won't complain anyway says she in a madly martyred voice. You wait till I lay my hands on you though! I hope to hear in this letter that leave has been granted and you'll be here in 3 weeks time. Tell the C.O. about Alan's Christening etc. and he's sure to weaken. I really must have it the end of this month as Daddy has got special leave.

It pours & pours here & I valiantly wade round to keep myself exercised & my liver from getting the better of me. I'm longing for my squash racquet, so don't be long darling & bring yours. Yesterday Patty spent most of the day here and we gaggled ourselves to a standstill. Its funny - where we used to me and what I said back we now talk extremely about babies and the price of butter! Pat is wild with jealousy over Alan and I don't wonder - he is enchanting now and darling he quite plainly said "Da-da" this morning and has been saying "Alan" to himself all afternoon.

Suzanne is feeling lots better now her rash is out it is only sickening for her being cooped up for 3 weeks. I'm just off to tea with your friend Mrs Cangle & will finish this when I get back.

[rest missing]

**Mac to Iris**

No date. Late May or early June 1942

My darling girl,

Haven't had a letter for three days now. You must be going back to your old ways!! No darling I am not worrying very much because as you say the mail is perfectly frightful these days and they may go anywhere.

At last I have a decent bearer. I think who has come back. Gulab turned up spick and span and I took him at once. He is very smart and picks things up quickly so I think that he should do me for a long while if his Mother and Father don't die to often.

Had a very sad case in the battalion. One of our best footballers Tarun Chandra died very suddenly of poison. That old M.I. Room orderly evidently gave him the wrong medicine. This has not been proved yet but if it is the case theres going to be trouble. I don't know if you remember Tarun. Young with pleasant smile. Most of them are so I don't expect you will. These I.M.H. people are the limit though. Speaking of Hospitals I paid Dr Brown Rs 10/- for some examination or other that you had. That is alright isn't it? (My club bill for last month was 10/8/-!) this included our treat to the Meinhardts.

Yesterday the Maharaja of Tripura visited us. He is an enormous man and drinks like a fish. He walked from our office up to the mess and was completely exhausted. Dripping with perspiration. Barua told us afterwards that his club bill during peace time in the Shillong Club was about Rs 5000/-. I am not doing so badly after all am I sweetheart.



I was very amused darling to hear that you were considered a child. My little Fatty is more than a child. Aren't you darling! Big girl now. Poor wee thing. Anyway this tall wasp hipped man loves little Fatty girl and Fatty Boy.

Haven't had much opportunity of getting out these days as it rains every day. I wanted to go out riding everyday if possible but as I say the rain makes the ground treacherous. I must say though it is not nearly as hot as I expected it. In Shillong one is lower down and it does get stuffy. Our garden is fading out now with nobody to look after it. I have eaten all I could out of the veg. garden except the pumpkins which are huge now. That blasted dog "Skipper" ploughs up and down our nice flower beds. I very nearly killed him the other day. I threw a stone at him and hit him on the head. He spun round in circles for a few minutes and then fell down. I ran as fast as I could and hoped for the worst but found him trampling on the Mess garden ten minutes later!

By the way our old cook has left looking an absolute wreck. I told him to have a good holiday and then look you up when he is alright. You might get a port some where for him. He is so darn good and honest. The cook we have now of course has gone back to practically 1st Bn standard. Anyway I believe shortly we will be going onto Field Service rations which means no mess bill? (Except one or two drinks?)

Darling you must excuse this mixed up letter but I am all jumpy just now. Don't know why. I do actually because you and Boy aren't with me. I can't sit quiet for a minute these days. Awful. Still one day, I always look forward to that one day when we shall be together again never to part for hours or minutes.

Give my love to all and huge kisses a hug for my Boy.

All the love in world to yourself darling and keep fit.

Yours always. Donald

P.S. Has the money arrived or do you need any more.

Undated and incomplete - first page(s) missing. Probably June 1942

.... thinking seriously of getting you back here. I really don't see any harm but of course it's the travelling for you. I could come down to Calcutta and meet you quite easily. Anyway I asked you in my last letter to think about it. Let me know your views. I don't think your Mother would agree with you, do you? Last night you know I was so fed up that I had my bath and went straight to bed and had Gulat bring my dinner over from the mess. Strictly gainst all laws but it did remind me of the days when we used to do that. Wasn't it wonderful. I had the photo of Fatty boy on the table beside me and the snaps of you and tried hard to pretend.

I see by the way that you are addressing my letters to E.F. [Elephant Falls] We have not gone over and I shall not do so for quite a while yet so just keep sending them here. I do wish I could see Fatty starting to eat. He must be simply wonderful. Darling do you ever think he will say "Da Da" really. I know he will love his Mother so much I just won't have a look in. Do you love him sweet heart? Gosh I wish I could see him. See you both.

I have not yet had [a]reply from the company as to how much they are going to give me. It will work out at something like Rs 600/- back pay anyway whether the half pay or not I just don't know. Anyway we are going to get something. Well darling write and tell me about yourself and Alan. Love to all. Hugs and kisses to you both. Donald.

Letter - undated and incomplete - probably mid June 1942

... At the end of this week I want to have a photo taken and send it to you. Darling you must send me one of yourself. I want that badly. I have put Fattys at my bedside table and see him and think of you before I go to sleep. He has grown hasn't he.

By the way I hope by now that you are getting my letters and have understood the reason. The floods in Assam have been the highest ever recorded and bits of the road are three feet under water. I believe the Sylket journey is absolutely foul. It takes something like four days to get down to Calcutta. Still I shall go that way if I come. I shall try and get a months leave and that will give me a lot more time.

Darling I am so glad you are enjoying your bridge. I am afraid I used to be horrid with you didn't I. Always saying 'You should have done that'. Poor wee thing and little little tears used to appear and we would feel so miserable. I am afraid the Meinhardts were a bit too much for me. They used to take it so seriously themselves.

The Deane's have left so there is now no women out here. Mrs Brown is still out at E.F. where we are going. Seems extraordinary that she should not go off somewhere where she has friends. She gets two gallons of petrol to run that huge car which requires that in a run from E.F. to Shillong & back.

When I come darling shall I bring you anything. I mean clothes or boxes. It would be a good opportunity to bring some things out but I hate travelling with too many things so the fewer the better. Anyway let me know if there is anything you want.

My love to all sweet and my dearest love to you and Fatty. Be seeing you soon.  
Much love, Donald.

Have heard nothing from Assam Company but have great hopes. Cross your fingers.

No date - probably later June 1942

Darling,

I am just writing this because I want to think of you and be with you. I am so fed up with things. This leave is still on the verge and no order has yet come out although people say that it is coming. I am simply pray[ing] every night that it won't be long. Anyway sweetheart don't let me get you downhearted. Your Assam Regt brooch is arriving today and I shall forward it to you. It is as I said before for your birthday darling and I am so sorry that I could not give you something nicer. By the way sweet I opened a letter of yours by mistake. I enclose it herewith. It was addressed to Mrs Donald Macfarlane. I naturally thought it was for myself. You don't mind though do you sweet.

Yesterday there was an Urdu exam for the lads into which 'our Les' went. He has not done very well I fear. I had to listen to him speaking and it was pretty painful. I hope he's passed actually because it will be hard luck if he doesn't. Cooksey was in it and did quite well. The C.O. was taking it and the old man was there for the whole day and was absolutely worn out. The result of course was that I had to keep up a merry prattle in Mess last night. Most frightful. I got down to my pet stories of snakes swallowing whole goats and things like that. It put people off their dinner but did keep the place alive. By the bye did you know that we had adopted 'Field Service Scale of Rations'. This means that messing is only Rs 1/- a day now so I should save on that. My Mess bill last month came to Rs 134/- altogether darling which when you think Rs 90/- is food and the balance booze and subs. Do you think I am being good. I paid back Chowdri some money this morning. He is the only fly in the ointment now and I shall soon clear him up. We have between us in the bank about Rs 1000/-, oh yes, minus my mess bill cheque. Not bad, but not good enough. Always back on this subject. Mustn't mention it again though I thought you might want to know how we

stood. I am expecting a reply from the Assam Company any time. I hope it is good news.

I am expecting the book and the other photograph today sweetheart. I hope that will arrive. It is one of you isn't it.

Well darling heart please excuse the short letter but the C.O. wants me to go out to Elephant Falls and if I leave this till after it will not catch the post.

My love to all.

Darling I shall see you soon so keep bright and don't cry my love. I love you. Love to Fatty, Donald.

10.6.42

My darling girl,

I haven't had a letter from you for two days now and I am sure that you have been getting my more regularly than that. I hope so anyway. One thing though I have the whole day today looking forward to the letter that must arrive tonight.

Talking of letters I enclose two from my Mother which although addressed to you I opened. I thought I should like to have a peep at how they are getting on. You will notice that they have just heard about the Boy and the letter took practically five months to come. I have sent another wire which I hope will cheer them up a bit. Also enclose a chit from Richard. I presume it is Richard and not some hand writing in disguise!! I suppose you took care of that and wired saying. Send love and letters to old address! Did you darling?

I am getting very restless up here. I want to go and see you and I want to get out of Shillong. I don't know what it is my blood that makes me feel like that. I see now that General Rich has put out an order that no leave will be granted unless for medical reasons. However I shall prostrate myself on the office table and blow bubbles and you never know what might happen (I know if you were here you would insert a nasty jab into the conversation) but what I mean is that they might let me go to Naini.

Andy and myself have decided we are not going to the club tonight but stay at home and get the bearers to make some curry for us. Far better. I must say darling and I hope you will agree that I am not beating it up. Of course you can only judge by what I tell you. But still I am telling you all my doings. Actually club is nearly dead now. Hardly a soul. You probably know the reason.

Darling I loved your poem but as to writing another verse. Actually I am trying and maybe by next letter you will get it. I shall enlist Andy to help me. He by the way was thrilled about his wives and their naughtiness. He said that he thought he had them well trained.

I have been doing quite a lot of riding just lately. Do you get a chance of doing any. I am rather beginning to like it for riding sake although I am sure I should love it if you were here! Someday we shall take Fatty out and watch him bounce about shaking. I should imagine that he would love it really. It will be fun teaching him all these things. Specially when we go down to the sea shore for the first time. Darling what does he laugh like. Does he smile a[t] everyone the same or does he smile really nice for my Fatty Girl. Do you think that he would remember me now? I don't suppose so but still if you say he does then I will believe you.

Darling you are naughty saying that I am happier without you. I know you are just teasing me. You mustn't though because it takes me such a long time [to] get in any retort.

Raining "Cats and Dogs" outside and has been for the last two days making it frightfully cold of course. I have, without shame, to say it put on a 'vesty'. Of course you can't see it so I don't blush or anything.

Well my darling heart if I get a letter tonight I shall write tomorrow again. Give my salaams to everybody and love to the family.

All the love in the world to you darling and my 'Fatty Boy'.

Yours ever & ever, Donald

P.S. Let me know when you run short of Cash.

18.6.42

Darling,

Two letters from you sweetheart and such nice ones. It cheered me up no end. Specially about the position after the war. As you point out there will be hundreds of people like us and they must do something about it.

I got a long ticking off letter from my Uncle Jim with Rs 100/-/- for a wedding present. I have just written an airgraph to him and thanked him for us both. Poor old man I think he is beginning to feel the strain of things by the letter. We have made it up anyway. Oh yes I will quote a paragraph he wrote. "You appear to have been extraordinarily lucky in your marriage. We were charmed with the appearance of your bride when we saw her photograph and are sure that she is as good and sensible as she is bonny. If you go by her advice you will be alright." Naturally I claim objection rights on the last sentence as there is only one man in the house & next to me comes my wife (ahem!) Still it was very good of him to send the money. Evidently he has lost a lot in Burma but has hopes of regaining it eventually. I believe but am not sure that some of our money is there too!

Still we won't talk of money matters. Loathsome subject. Although according to calculations and carefully worked cash a/c we would have just Rs 1500/- in the tank. That of course does not count what Chowdri is going to take off it!! Still we shall be over the top soon darling and then we shall save for our home leave. (Reading thro' this there seems to be an awful lot of STILLS). I am so sorry that Patty has turned so funny. As you say she will probably be alright after she has had a baby. But nobody could be so nice as my Fatty Baby could there darling. I seem to be saying all the right things morning sweetheart. Maybe some of your lessons are beginning to sink in.

I saw the most amusing 'Flick' last night. If you get a chance to and see it called. "Philadelphrea (?) Story", Gary Cooper, James Stewart, Katherine Hepburn. Really is good. Tough isn't the word for it.

You know what? Of course you don't. We are going to E. Falls after all. To my mind they are so blasted busy forming Corps, Div, Brigades etc that they can't make up their minds. To much RED TAPE.

We shall probably be detailed to go [ next page missing]

22. 6. 1942

My darling,

I have been awfully naughty darling and have not written for two whole days. The reason sweetheart, and there is on[e] is that I have been fairly busy with this move of ours. We are as I told you going to E.F. and it takes some working out before hand. But darling what makes me feel bad is that I got three letters from you in one mail.

Thanks so much sweetheart. You have no idea how much I long for your letters. Darling don't take to heart what I said about not getting letters. I understand, I am only greedy and want one every hour if it could be so. Sweetheart I am so sorry that you are feeling lonely etc. I am just the same believe me and I hate it more but sweet I don't think it worth coming just now. I will tell you immediately when I think everything is O.K. One or two things developing if you see what I mean.

I am trying my darrest to get leave at the end of next month. I have no idea whether it will come off or not but I am going to try. I mentioned leave for Officers casually to the C.O. and he was in perfect agreement in giving leave. So as far as the C.O. is concerned I need not worry and I shall say that I want leave on compassionate grounds or the like. Send me a wire like Naltin?? Used to get!

Things generally very quiet up here. I went out riding the other day with Dick Daly and we rode right down to the golf course and back this Shillong. About 15 miles. I was and am still feeling a bit sore about the nether region. Still did me a lot of good. Got rid of an awful liver I had. I am getting most frightful livers these days. Cursing and shouting at everybody. Some of them need it too. Also had a round of golf at which I am, though I say so myself, getting quite good. I play with Cooksey who says not a word and smites the ball everytime. He is very good indeed. He went round in 85 and myself in 96. Not bad was it darling.

By the way sweetheart many happy returns of the day. Big girl now darling. I wish I could kiss you, your eyes, your little ears and your sweet mouth. Oh darling sometimes I feel that if I don't see you soon I shall go mad really. It is about a month ago that you left and it seems years and years. Why must it be like this, why must we be apart with only letters to keep us in touch with one another. I hate it all. I do not want money or anything just let us be together and no none to interfere. And we will one day. Just think of it. You Alan and myself. I can hardly wait. I dream of it. I think of it. Do you sweetheart. Anyway sweet heart don't let me depress you and don't you get depressed. We shall be together soon.

Had another letter from my mother in which she says she has not heard from us yet. She must have had my two wires by now anyway which is very quick that way I believe. I enclose the letter.

Darling do send me a photo of yourself and Alan. I must have it. I am having one done of my self shortly and will send it soon. How is my Fatty after his vaccination. Hope alright poor little thing. I am so glad darling that he is the best looking baby of the bunch. Can you wonder! I wish I could seem [sic] now.

Well darling heart I have not more to tell and I will not miss two days before writing again.

Let me know if you need any more money. Rolling in wealth now darling rolling!?  
Give my love to all and every bit of love to you my little girl and big kiss for Fatty.

Yours ever & ever, Donald.

Undated and incomplete - just last page ? June 1942

I shall send or may bring your racket when I come! Send me the book and the photo soon sweetheart. I am just dying to see it.

Well darling I must do some work. Give my love to all and darling please don't despair or get cross with me. I shall try really hard and get leave.

My love to you and Alan xxxx

Yours Donald

No date - ? June 1942

Darling heart,

I have been naughty. I haven't written for about thirty six hours darling. I am just beginning to see why you like to get letters. If one day goes by with out me getting one I get awfully angry. I have had three letters since you have been away! Mind you they have been lovely letters sweetheart and I love them. Do you think I am any better at writing. I mean they are a bit longer aren't they?

Well this week end went off very quietly. I went to the club on Saturday evening. We had, Andy and myself, supper here and jumped into one of our own cars. Lovely great Chev[rolet]. Arrived at Club and met Flex and Mrs Holroyd & Mrs and Tom Darby. Still, got clear eventually and met 'Rats' as we call him. (The C.O.). Muttered to me that his car had broken down somewhere in Shillong, handed me the keys and asked me if I could do anything about it. Andy and I equipped with such precise knowledge of its whereabouts etc set off. Contacted C.O.'s car about an hour later near Roberts Hospital. Got it going but it had no head lights. However Andy and I managed by following one another in two cars to bring it to earth at the Club. Charged in and told the C.O. triumphantly that his car was back and he could drive it back. However he must of smelt a rat because he asked us all about it and eventually extracted from us that the lights did not work. Said without a blush that he was taking three or four women home would we mind frightfully if he took our car with lights. Anyway to cut this long preamble short we got home with no lights. The M.T. squad were working vigorously on the C.O.'s car at 0700 hrs Sunday morning straightening out mud guards etc. And he blamed the LIGHTS.

Sunday Andy, Cooksey and myself again equipped with ??? M.T. went into golf. I wish we could only have thought about golf earlier. It is a lovely place darling. Just like home in some parts. I am getting quite good at golf now. Andy is damn amusing. He actually hit a ball over his back yesterday and then of [course] denied strongly that he had anything to do with it. I wish you could come down with us. I know you would love it.

Here I am just burbling about myself and never asking how my darlings little cold is. I am frightfully sorry sweetheart it happened. I warned you though with these fans and hot and cold climate you have to be very carefully indeed. How is my Fatty boy. You have no idea how proud of you I am. I only wish I could just see you some times. Fatty gurgling and kicking. I'll bet he is an awful little rascal.

Maybe the day is not far away when I will see you now. Only don't get filled with hopes yet. It would be far to hot for you to come down to Calcutta darling just now. May be when it cools off a bit we shall manage. I shall look forward to it whenever it is. I must see you both.

Please excuse this hasty scribble darling but again I am writing this in office with people rushing in and out.

Let me know if you want any more money. We have a credit of about Rs 12/- now. That is without the wireless and money from home. Of course I have to pay Chowdry out of that. We are getting on though.

My love to all.

My fondest and dearest love to you and Fatty. Yours ever and ever, Donald

Undated - ? June 1942



My darling, things are getting better and better and I shall see you definitely in less than two weeks time. Today I got the confirmation of my leave from Area H.Q. and everything is set except that I have about a week to go before I can move out of this. I did what you would think a dreadful thing this morning. The C.O. asked me if I wanted to go to Staff College and that he would put my name up. I refused darling. Now wait a minute before you say anything. Unless I can get some practical experience this Staff College Course is no good at all to anybody. I have been told that by a lot of people. I rather have some experience than go to Staff College. There is plenty of time for it anyway. Anyway if you think I am awfully naughty I shall ask for the next one that comes which is only three months later. I am very sorry to hear about Fatty not being his usual self sweetheart. There is nothing wrong with him is there. Both of you seem to be in the wars. Darling of course I don't mind you writing exactly what you feel like. That is what I am here for and soon I shall be with you and you can tell me all about it. I am worse than you are by a long way you know but we shall make up for it and we shall [have] an absolutely terrific time together. We shall go for walks and play with Fatty and go to pictures and dances and have a really good time. We have plenty of money I can tell you oodles and oodles so we need not worry about that at all. While I go through Calcutta I will buy you something darling but I don't know quite what you would like and by the time to reply to this I am afraid I shall be with you. Anyway I will see what I can get for you all. I feel terrific. Sweetheart won't you come out to a dance with me. Just think of it. I shall be asking that soon and darling you mustn't refuse!

Well I must get this off. My letters are getting shorter & shorter but it is all excitement really.

Love to all and please take care of yourself sweet and don't worry and have really good sleeps.

Always always yours xxx Donald xxxx

Undated ?June 1942

My darling,

Another letter from you and I am really rather upset my sweet over your health. When I come up you and I are going to see a doctor and get you put right. I wonder what it is that makes you feel like that. Anyway we must get you right and you must promise that you will go and see a doctor now or when I come. The photos were sweet and really I love Fatty's expressions. He is going to be a Tartar isn't he. Oh darling you have no idea how much I am looking forward to seeing you both. Only fifteen days from today and I start off. I have already started to get things ready and am feeling a lot better now that I know I am going to get away from it all for a while. We are naturally still very busy with our change over. There never seen such a crush in all my life. Men all over the place.

I went into the Club on Saturday in the back of a truck with the C.O. On the way back something went wrong with the petrol just outside the Club and we pushed and swore heartily for hours. We eventually got back about 2 o'clock feeling dead. I think I shall resign again from the Club. We cannot get in and I am damned if I will pay Rs 20 for a taxi. That is what they are charging nowadays. By the way I played billiards all evening and I didn't dance once. Very good aren't I darling. I don't know I just hate dancing with anybody else these days. I am just dying to take you out to dances again sweetheart. Won't it be lovely. Darling tell me where you will be waiting for me when I come up. I want to see you just as I get over the rise of the hill at Naini. You will be

frightfully shy if I kiss you darling lots of times wont you but I am going to do it. This is terrible writing but people keep bursting in wanting to know this and that.

Leo Davis has gone into hospital with some horrible illness. He keeps swelling up all over the place and nobody quite knows why. C.O. puts it down to excitement over the newly born. I didn't do anything like that did I darling. Farmer is also in Hospital. We have now got three BOs in. If it wasn't for my leave I should do the same. I am not feeling at all well these days and definitely need a holiday. Darling I am sorry I must be boring but I am feeling awful and am just living for the day when we are together. I hope you are right about Russia and that you will come back here. You have no idea how much I do.

I love you sweetheart and honestly hope that you are better by the time this letter reaches you. I feel almost like sending you a wire but it will only worry you.

My love to all and excuse this short note but there is really nothing going on but hard work just now.

All the love in the world dearest to you two.

Xxx Donald xxx

???? (fifteen days before leave) Mac to Iris

- Iris unwell... The photos were sweet and really I love Fattys expressions. He is going to be a Tartar isn't he. Oh darling you have no idea how much I am looking forward to seeing you both.

## Mac to Iris

No date - probably June 1942 Thursday

My darling girl,

I did not write yesterday after all because things turned up one after another & I did not get much time to write the rest of my fan mail!

I am doing my damnest to get this leave business thro but so far have met with no success. It is purely a 'fad' of General Richs because everybody else has been getting leave quite easily. Still darling heart you expect me at the end of next month. How I am looking forward to seeing you and Alan. You just have no idea darling. I am going [to] kiss you and kiss you all day until you really are fed up with me. Your little ears won't be there at all by the time I am finished. Fatty Boy of course will be thrown about, he must be tough darling. Tell me all about him sweetheart. How he laughs how he looks and how he tries to talk which I am sure he does by now.

I went to the Club, darling, and broke my record of not drinking all week. However it was not badly broken. I had the whole of the Assam Regt and some R.A.F. round me and I was telling them that they should all get married. They all agreed when I had finished telling them my experiences. There was a mad rush for the three females which the club boasts of these days but I heard of no engagements or the like.

I saw but did not meet Brig. Farley doing his stuff with that Verdun woman. The lads are off again. A lot of exceedingly beautiful damsels have just come out from home for the Q.A.M.S. (Muring). This is I may say what I hear. I have not seen one yet. I don't think that there is any chance at the rapid pace at which the officers of the Assam Regt get off with girls. I have never seen such a frightened lot. I also noticed the Glass girl here again. I did not speak to her but I thought she went to Naini Tal. The Club is

absolutely dead really. Thousands of men and honestly about 2 ½ women. Poisonous hags too, which would not be looked at once never mind twice in the ordinary state of affairs, but now, they are having the time of their lives.

By the way darling I still have my “mouche” which has grown considerably. I haven’t yet heard what you actually think about it. The state of affairs is now that during the day it looks like a dirty smudge but at night being fair it catches the light and twinkles. Ah, Ah, then with my eye lashes flapping and my mouche twinkling I go into action. Sounds alright but when I go into action everybody spoiled it by saying “Are you growing a “mouche:, (can’t spell moustache), Rather pulls me up when you think darling I have [been] trying for over 11 days 6 hrs 3 mins. Still when I come up I shall try it out on you and sweet heart don’t spoil it will you?

I have never seen such rain as we are having now. It swamped the office last night. I can hear the C.O.’s paddling about next door playing, I am sure, with a paper boat. Still it is something for him to do which keeps him out of mischief.

Darling have you ever read a book called “Rogue Harries and Judith Paris”. Marvellous. If you haven’t I shall send it to you. I know you would like it. It is on the same style as “Gone with the Wind”. Written, by the way, by Hugh Walpole.

Well darling heart I must stop the burble and get some work done. REALLY. Not mind you that there is all that work to be done.

My love to all sweet and to your dear little self all the love in the world. I love you sweetheart more and more every minute you are away from me.

Kiss Fatty for me.

Donald

No date – June or July 1942

My sweetheart,

I am terribly sorry about that last effort of mine but I was feeling so miserable. Lot better now in fact bubbling over. I asked the C.O. to have another go at General Goddard about families and he did. Imagine what the General said he would shut an eye to wives coming up. So darling you can come back. Of course there are one or two stipulations. One is that you must wait until this Congress business dies down and all is well for travelling. I shall endeavour to get to Calcutta and meet and bring you up this way as it is a new way and you cannot go through Panda?? etc this time. But darling please please wait until I or you hear that travelling is O.K. I would simply hate anything to happen. What I suggest as a programme is that you leave Alan with your Mother, which, she very kindly said she would look after. You come here and then in about two months I get my leave and we can both toddle back and see Alan and with any luck bring him back with us. I do not think it worth while bringing him just now darling because...?..? Anyway sweetheart what do you think of it all and what does your mother really think of keeping “Fatty”. This time I hope nothing will get in the way and nothing shall stop us seeing each other. I am looking forward to it and my life has cheered up no end. We shall only have two rooms and a bathroom which I think should be ample for the time being. It will be nice and cosy and especially in the cold weather we shall want a nice cosy room. How does one spell cosy? Not right. Never mind you know.

My sweet, I was so glad to get your letter to say that you were sleeping better and generally feeling better. I have had a letter from you for the last three days now. I hope you are getting mine. I suppose this rail show must have delayed some because they are still bringing letters up the Sylhet way.

Darling I am just dying to get the photo of you and Fatty. I am waiting until my mouche has grown to full proportions and then I shall send you one and see whether I must shave it off or not. It is quite good now and clearly visible at anything under four feet. Fatty must be an absolute darling these days and I so do wish I could see him. I have just sent a reminder down re leave question. I hope Rich has lifted the ban and we can go. I shall be there before you know what has happened. I shall peep my mouche round the door and woe betide any young snake which may be there, of course I won't mind how many S.B.s are there!

You know darling I was just looking at our little garden. It is wonderful now, at least it would be if someone was here to look after it. Gladiola (sp) and most beautiful yellow carnations. I wish to God you could see it all, absolutely lovely. I am doing quite a bit of painting these days so maybe you might get an idea if I can manage!

We are a very depleted lot nowadays what with two companies at E.F. and ourselves here. There are actually only seven officers in the mess. All of them as decent as Cooksey. I sit there and, honestly darling, yatter away about absolutely nothing. For instance the other night I told them all of three suicides. I thought this must surely waken somebody up. The C.O. did his damnest but not a word out of any body else. The C.O. and I have actually reduced it to a competition. It is the only thing we could do. Not counting ourselves we [have] taken bets on who will say the most. I beg him a peg last night and I backed Cooksey to say three words more than anybody else. I lost, only said two!! Still it is all rather amusing.

I am going to try and play tennis on Saturday with Cooksey, Davis and Barua. They are all frightfully snappy but still I shall have a crack at it anyway. It is simply heavenly weather up here just now. Not too hot and not too cold.

Darling you have been frightfully good over the money business honestly. Please sweetheart do not stint yourself in anyway will you. Get everything you want and hang the rest. I feel as if we are on top of the world. If this company business does come off then it will be too easy. If we get the back pay for the last two years it means something like Rs 5000/- Still I am not building any sand castles yet. Flux [a tea planter from Assam Company] did seem optimistic about it though. Please don't pay your mother back yet awhile until I see how things are this month.

I have sold the hot case and or the 'Petromax'. Both fetched in Rs 48/-/- not too bad what?

Well darling I am off to do an awful job and I bet you don't know what it is. "Pay the servants."! Still I just chuck the money at Gulab and make him work it out.

Please excuse the hurried chit but I shall write again tomorrow.

All the love in the world darling heart to you and to Fatty. Xxxxx Donald

No date. June or July 1942

Darling,

I got a letter from you sweetheart yesterday after 7 days without. I am not blaming you as the fault lay with the railway which has broken down. Something like three bridges have fallen in and nobody has had any letter or papers for ages. However when they do come through I should get lots of lovely letters.

Darling you are naughty I feel just the same about you darling this separation at times just about kills me and I go into fearful frets and moods. I wish I could be with you so as we could see each other every day and hour and you could lay your little head on my shoulder sweetheart and believe me it won't be much longer. I am still trying to get leave and things look a bit more promising. Just four more weeks and I have every

hope of being with you both. You know I love you darling more than anything or anybody in the world and I shall always be the same. Nothing could ever change me and when you can't sleep think of how much I love you and how someday that little white cottage is going to be and Alan running up and down with his Macfarlane kilt an no (TROUSE) on. I always do this and I go peacefully to sleep imagining all kinds of things we shall do. I honestly don't think it will be much longer before the time comes when we are on the boat homeward bound and saying "hell" to this war.

I was very amused at your story of Mrs Webster's party. It must have been terrific fun!! I don't like the sound of the after show party or back stage goings on. These startled troubled youths are worth watching and I shall hack him to pieces if I ever catch him coming the soft stuff on you again. I hope darling that you told him that you were married to a slim youth who could knock stars out of him. Anyway I could waggle my ginger 'mouche' at him and that would give him a fright.

I am sure Fatty Boy would still kiss his Daddy even though he has got a 'mouche' (and so would his mother).

Things very quiet up here. No life at all except Sunday Golf. Andy, Cooksey and myself played 36 holes the other day (Sunday) and I didn't take a hat. Is my face red. I shall peel for the next month I should think. Anyway it was grand fun although I played simply foul golf. I seem to get worse instead of better at the game. I wish you were here so as to teach me the finer parts of the game. Barua was playing with some beautiful Rani girl which he has got hold of. I don't think he played much golf.

By the way darling, just to make you furious. I was accosted Saturday before last in the Club by a young S.B. I was dancing with Dora and was tapped on the shoulder and hailed with "Hullo Mac". I turned round expecting to see nothing less than one of the blokes or my own wife. It was a woman, I discovered this later, called Dorothy Ball whom I had met years ago. Needless to say I turned Cherry Red and stammered something about the Club being full and got away pretty quickly. I haven't been back since in case she gets hold of me again. I never know what to say to these old acquaintance. I wish you were here to deal with them.

Now darling haven't I been good in telling you all about it. It is the first woman barring Dora and Betty that I have talked to.

Well sweetheart promise me not to cry any more until I come and then you can cry all you want on my shoulder and tell me all about it.

My love to all,

All the love in the world to you and Fatty. I love you, I love you.

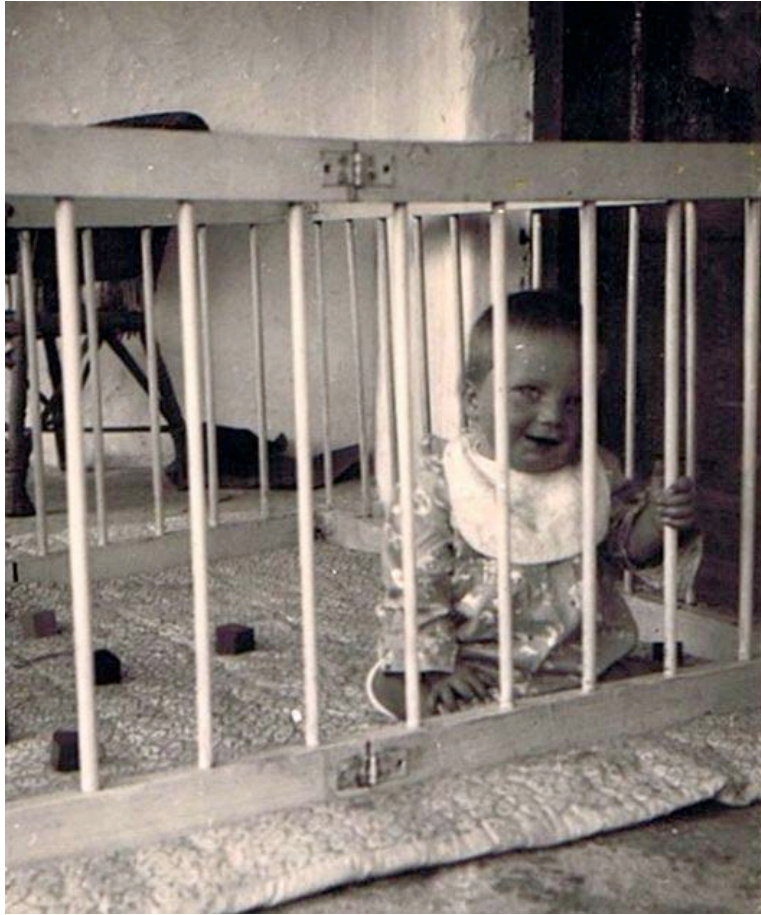
Yours for ever xxxxxx Donald

## ALAN ABOUT THREE TO NINE MONTHS

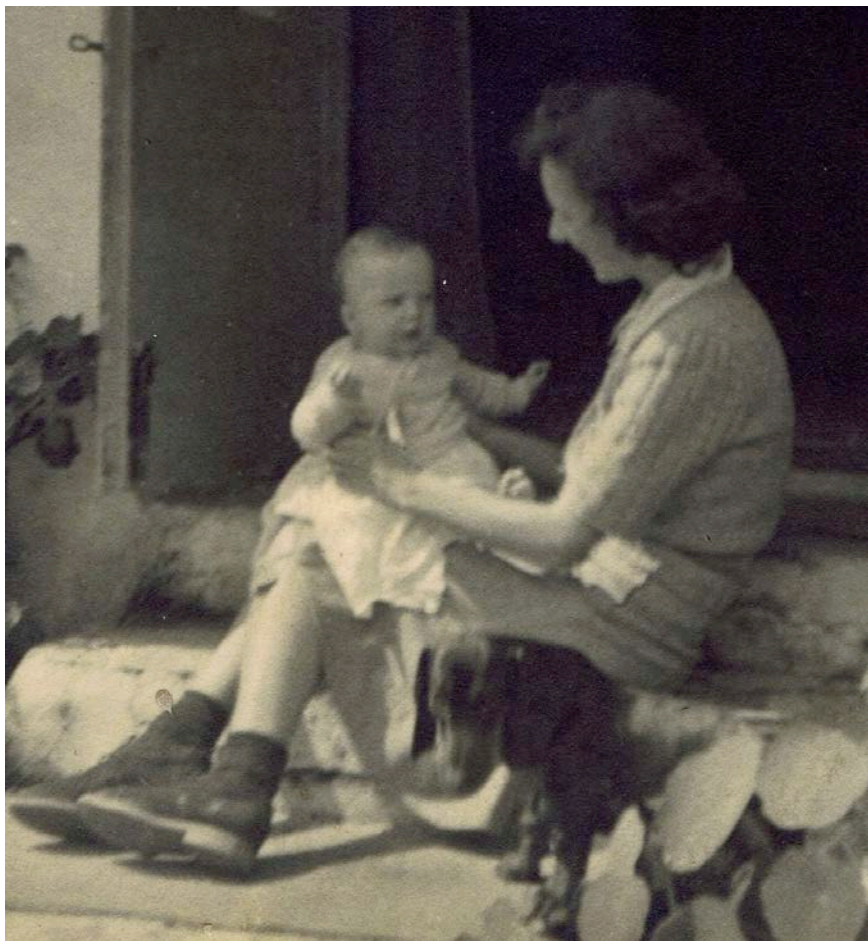














## 16 NAINI TAL: JULY-AUGUST 1941(Before Appendicitis)

### Babies Book

Baby was christened at St. John in the Wilderness, Naini Tal on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1942, and received the following names: Alan Donald James. Godmother Suzanne Marshall.

On the occasion baby receives the following presents:

Silver beer mug from James Bason [probably killed in Singapore]

Silver napkin ring from Granny

He first sat alone on July 28<sup>th</sup>. He sat in his basket and picked flowers from a vase and stuffed them into his mouth. He rolled over onto his tummy alone on July 15<sup>th</sup> - he was as surprised as the rest of us at this achievement.

As far as I know, there is nothing about this period in my mother's autobiography.

From Richard's account:

### Christening in July 1942

My parents were awaiting me, and given leave I set off to meet them. They were in Naini Tal, a hill station in the foothills of the Himalayas where the British went to cool off in the hot weather. I took the train to Khatgodam and then boarded a bus for a somewhat hazardous journey up the mountain road parts of which had been washed away by the monsoon. Mum and Dad greeted me, and there was Robert, the boy I had despatched to the east and also Iris. She had found her man, and a splendid man he was. They had been married on the first of March 1941 at St Stephens Church, Bareilly in the United Provinces, "and afterwards at 4 Cantonments," a full Raj wedding. She was eighteen. Now she had with her son ... (First draft of 'Road from Mandalay')

### LETTERS

#### JULY (possibly some June or August)

##### Iris to Mac

? early July 1942

Darling a miracle - 2 letters from you in one day. And one from Mummy by the same mail! What's happened? Not the inspiration of beautiful nursing sisters I trust.

I understand the difficulties of getting leave and I won't groan any more but just hope you won't be too long. I'm going to have Alan christened on my birthday so try and make that your mark but of course I realise you can't leave the C.O. stranded. When you do come I shall do my damndest to get you to take me back to Shillong - use all my womanly wiles and ooze glamour all over you so be prepared darling. And Alan will say "Da-da" so enchantingly you just won't have the heart to leave him behind. He says it all the time now, its too sweet. I'm starting him on veal jelly to-morrow - you boil veal bones for 8 hours will you get the absolute essence and then let it jelly. I wonder what

he'll think of it! After about a week of that I shall give him a little porridge, and then some soup and vegetables. He'll be growing up so fast these next few months – you cant miss him darling. I do hope his picture arrived safely – you haven't mentioned it yet.

I've done nothing these last few days – my wild social whirl being rather hampered by Suzanne's chicken-pox. Not sarcasm of that sentence – the social whirl in question being parochial hen-parties for the sake of discussing Baby Welfare. Actually I like a peaceful life, bint as you know incredibly lazy. But I do walk everywhere darling, the only dandy I've taken being for Alan to be photographed. I've put on weight since I arrived so when I stop feeding Alan I'm going to SLIM – seriously. At present I tell myself that I must eat for two which is very comforting. Our little cook has arrived & has got a marvellous job at Topsy's Evacuee Hostel – at least he said he wanted 60/- pay so I hope he has got it after all. I suppose he was browned off after the Mess episode. Will you tell Jenks to give him a chit & a good one too! If it isn't good you can write another one yourself. How is jabbeling Jacobs? He didn't by any happy chance die under the anaesthetic did he? I suppose his sole topic of conversation now is My Operation – what fun for you all! You don't tell me anything about the blokes – which of the new lot you like bet & why. I really am interested darling!

Billy arrives on leave next Wednesday for about 10 days & Richard on 21st & Daddy somewhere in between so we'll be some party. If you're here with Richard you'll have to restrain your language as according to Billy he is very strict with himself & even thinks the Cinema leads to "moral degradation"! Rather terrifying isn't it? I suppose it's the effect of Oxford but I shouldn't think it'll survive India long. We're all over-awed at having to live up to him!

I'm having a lovely evening by the fire, with dinner on a tray. If only you were here it would be perfect. Suzanne has some lovely gramophone records we could play & I long for you to make love to me when I put them on. I shall be able to play with your moustache as well as your hair now. Darling, I've almost forgotten what you look like & completely what your voice is like. What fun we'll have when you come. There's a very low dance hall I want you to take me to, will you? The Royal for dinner too, don't forget, & a lollipop at the Cinema. It'll be like another honeymoon won't it? I'm so excited, but I keep telling myself not to get worked up. If you don't get leave I'm definitely coming to you – you know that don't you? Truly!

I've started rather a nice book called "Occupied Territory". If you ever get a chance you must read "Don't Mr Disraeli" which I've heard is marvellous.

Well, dearest heart, no more for now. I think of you every night – I hope you do too.

All the love I have and Alan sends lots of dribbly kisses. Hugs darling. Totty.

c. 1<sup>st</sup> July 1942 (10 days before hoped-for leave of Mac on 10<sup>th</sup> July)

Darling one –

My cold has reached its climax so I'm having dinner in bed and a fire in my bedroom! It is lovely. I only hope I haven't given Alan my cold. He has been so cheerful to-day, but simply refuses to wear a hat, I don't know what we're going to do with him. Judging by the enclosed letter you were the same – you must have been a little sweeting, darling, how I'd love to have seen you in your wee tantrums! Alan's temper is the sweetest thing I've ever seen and when he flings himself on his back, gets crimson in the face and waves his clenched fists at me I laugh so much that he had to join in. I'm so terribly glad we had a baby so soon, although in some ways it spoilt our first year, Aren't you? It gives me a sense of security in this uncertain world, and a deep content, too, that I have at last achieved something perfect, done something really



worthwhile. I shall never do anything well, but I have produced a son which is much more important than all the other things. Of course you did help, darling, but I insist on taking the credit for sons, I'll grant you the girls!

I got a letter to-day saying you were better & hoped to be here on the 10th - please take care of yourself till then darling! Only 10 days and they'll fly I know. Perhaps Himpy will have a tooth by then - he dribbles so much his chin is perpetually sore and he looks very like a slum child poor pet!

Patty spent the morning here to-day - she is still painfully thin but is trying for another baby - not very wise I think but still. Suzanne leaves I think on Sunday. She is going straight to a job where she gets Rs 125, though she isn't really fully trained. Pretty good! Her boss is Oxford Groupy - his wife is credited to have said to a young Subaltern at a dinner party - "Do you know God"? to which he answered apologetically "No I'm afraid I don't. What regiment's he in?" Suzanne ought to enjoy herself!

Well darling heart I'm very tired & snively. I hope these letters are reaching you quicker - this is probably the last you'll get. I hope so.

Kisses from Fatty -

All my love my sweet - Totty

? early July 1942

[first pages missing]

We have just been to a very good variety show given by the R.A.F. - songs & dances & smutty jokes and all awfully well done. There are masses of troops here whom everyone entertains madly. Joanie Davis had one of them to bridge & when she asked him what his conventions were he said "Well I don't know reely - I only started this 'ere game day before yesterday"! They're awfully spoilt, with dances & things got up for them.

By the way if you're wanting to sell your rifle, bring it with you as the Thompsons want one.

The photo is ready and I will send it along. Not good of me darling, but rather twee of Alan. There is another which you can see when you come in which I look haggard. Do tell me soon if an when you're coming and make it a month. Billy says if you have a wife & family you can get your full time & not count the journey in it.

Well, my dearest darling it's very late & I'm tired so no more. Not much longer before I have your shoulder to go to sleep on. But of course you always shove me out don't you? Cad! Alan is getting very excited about your coming and says "Da-da" beseechingly all day.

Heaps of love to you my sweet - For always - Totty

? June or July 1942

[first pages missing]

I played bridge with Ruth Churchill on Sunday & yesterday Mah-Jong, but otherwise have done nought. The 4th at bridge was an awfully nice Mrs Coventry from Calcutta who lives opposite the Smiths. By the way, d'you know whose haunting me now - Elaine Jarvie! She's looking freakish & according to Mrs S.Fox lives in complete squalor & leaves her baby all day with a filthy bearer. It is always ill & underfed - it makes me boil with rage, when you think of all the people who long for babies & can't have them. She is always trying to make dates but so far none of them have come off & now I hear

she's gone to hospital. Now that I've had a baby it breaks my heart to see hear of one badly treated. Poor mite - & she calls it "Junior" as a final insult.

Les will be a proud papa soon - is he getting leave? If you can come next month I'll have Alan weaned by then. He turns up his nose at me now and yells for his bottle!

Mrs Thompson has just come from Ranchi & is horrified at the idle women in Naini - but what can one do when nobody gives one the least encouragement? They talk about hospitals & convalescent homes, & talk & talk & that's all that happens. Everyone here is very depressed at the news, but I had a feeling it would reach a pitch before the turn came. There are a lot of women still in Shillong I hear & everyone says it will be safe there till the cold weather.

Suzanne poor dear has just gone down with chicken pox so I wonder if Alan will [page missing]

? mid July 1942

Darling, No letter for 4 days but it must be the breakdown in the railway. You can always blame it on that anyway! Your next letter must say you have got leave and I'm getting terribly excited. I met Mrs Mortimer to-day & she is going back to Shillong almost immediately. Which has decided me definitely. After all darling the Japs won't come in the rains, & it goes on raining till November in Assam. So it is worth it. We could picnic without unpacking anything and live in half a bungalow if need be. If you really think it is risky I could leave Alan for a couple of months (though I should hate it). It would be worth it - for me - to come for a month only if need be. However we can discuss it when you come.

Billy has arrived, looking very thin and brown but otherwise the same. He says he liked Macleod but he was very lazy & had a stinging tongue & said things about you behind your back! She apparently is someone to keep clear of. Billy says, which I thought would interest you, that there is a course in Gorilla [sic] Warfare in Sangor. It would be grand if you could come on here after that but it's too late now I suppose. Or perhaps you could go to it after your leave & I could come too. I think it would be very useful don't you - specially for your regiment. Rather fun too. By the way, is your friend Werner in the 4th Gurkhas? Because if so he is missing. I hope it's not the same one.

[rest missing]

?July 1942

My dearest,

I'm giving this book to Mrs Mortimer to give you. I was keeping it here for you but perhaps you'd like it for the train journey.

It makes me very jealous to think of her on her way back to Shillong. I wish I'd made up my mind to go too. Never mind, if you don't get leave, may I come at the end of August and spend a month or two with you? Unless something drastic happens I shall have to leave again before the cold weather so I don't think its fair to bring Alan. Specially now that his food is getting complicated and he can't just "muck in". But you say darling.

Awful shock for you darling - Niall is out here again!! At Poona! And Maureens husband. Rotten luck for her.

Excuse mess but I've just been eating a very gooey cream cake.

Will write to-day as well.

Bless you my sweet - Totty

No date; no first page.

I had a letter from Niall the other day, written on board ship, which annoyed me intensely - he is getting very conceited it strikes me. He said "I have given up Adjutant, but I feel guilty as I'm afraid the Bn. will suffer." ! I will graciously allow you to kick him in the pants (or trows) if you meet & I know you will enjoy that darling!

I had such a lovely dream about us last night - I nearly burst into tears when I found it was only a dream. I wish I could dream of you every night. I wish you would send me a photo of you - please darling - I haven't a single one ^& you have lots of me. I would like it more than anything in the world. A swap would do. Oh how I long to feel you again & scratch your silly old head and curl up into a chair with you all round me. I grow more in love from you. We are silly to have let ourselves get as bad as this aren't we darling?!

Excuse paper, its all I have.

God bless you, my sweet - Always xxxx Totty xx

July or August 1942

[first page(s) missing]

Next day my sweet & I've missed the post so will write a bit more. I got a lovely long letter from you to-day which cheered me a lot. [see letter about Les and Joan and baby] Well done old Les, achieving an heir! Congratulate him from me will you? Poor brat having Joan as a mother, do you think she'll ever wash it? I must write to her & send her something for it. Elaine Jarvie haunts me - she barges round the Boat House with bright red cheeks, that vast fur cape, looking dirtier than ever. Ghastly creature. Her baby is permanently ill. I met a girl yesterday who married one of the Baluchis in Bareilly my first year there. She's gone dead white (her hair) and looks fifty, I've never seen such a transformation. Do you remember Mavis who wrote such long pointless letters about Ramgarh? She is due on the 5th to stay with Yvonne. I told you, didn't I, Yvonne is **SECRETLY** encaged - one of those open secrets she shouts at you across the Cinema. She spends her time wondering if she isn't in love with every other young man she meets & Michael keeps putting off their marriage because he must have 2 houses & doesn't know if he can afford Yvonne as well. All very odd, & Suzanne & I are doing our best to dissuade Y. She isn't in the least in love, but I feel she could never be with anyone - Yvonne de Hanwel? Is far too important. Or am I being catty - I don't thin I could be that, could I darling?!

Bless you Angel xxx

?July 1942

[no start]

As usual this hasn't got posted so I'll write another page, & enclose one from your mother. Its grand your father has a job, and Alan is in the navy. I don't like that too much actually - in our family all the Alan's go into the navy and get sunk - my cousin has just been torpedoed. But I don't expect the curse is on your family too. I will never let Fatty go into the navy.

I'm sending his picture as still no news of leave from you. Remember, if you can't get it in August I'm coming back to Shillong. What do you think about the winter? Mummy and Daddy will be at Agra but we can't possibly afford 590/- a month in the Cecil Hotel. I suppose I'll have to stay up here. Lets hope something will have wiped the Japs off the map by then and we'll be back in our little house. I wish I could see the garden now. Oh darling I do long for you so - I do hope you're really trying about leave. Everyone else seems to get it so easily.

No more now.

Bless you my darling

?July 1942

[pencil and pen]

My dearest love - I'm writing in bed feeling very tired & sentimental and lonely for you. But still, it won't be long before you'll be here to kiss me to sleep. I want you so much its almost a pain in me. Do you feel that or don't you think I should say so anyway? I expect this will sound fort in the morning, but now I want to write exactly what I feel. When we are close there is no need for words but when we're apart we must say all we feel & think - you mustn't keep any thoughts secret from me, will you darling? When I turn off the lights in a few moments I shall snuggle down & have a lovely imagination that you are here & I'll talk to you for ages - much longer than if you were here wanting to go to sleep. I think I'll stop for now before I tell you any more you shouldn't know! Good night my heart!

This is the next day. What an idiot I am last thing at night aren't I darling! t is still raining - honestly it hasn't stopped for about a week and Alan is losing his lovely colour for lack of sunshine. He has a tummy upset but I think it must be teeth coming as he's very fit in himself. He can roll over and try to crawl but he's very lazy and doesn't try often! I don't mind actually - I'd rather he did things slowly, it always pays in the end.

Mummy has suddenly shot off to Agra for 5 days to try & arrange a bungalow for the winter, so I'm in sole charge. Robert has all his little friends for the day every day & they scream round the house being bombs & battleships without ceasing. Its getting a trifle exhausting. He is at present torpedoing a small boy with pine cones but the little boy won't die in spite of having been killed several times according to Robert!

Do you know who's up here now, Eileen McLean?! She's just rung me up & we both said how were we for 10 minutes & that was that. Dear Eileen. I had a letter from Niall yesterday! He's in Poona & ^ his letter took nearly two months to get here. Not at all enthusiastic about being out here & only expressing a wish to see Alan. So don't panic as Andy would say.

I'm in the middle of writing a play which is rather engrossing me. About India & everyone's terribly debauched & there's masses of scandal & beautiful women & snaky Majors with Past - it's great fun. Suzanne is writing on a similar theme & we get hysterical comparing notes. I feel I can write & then it suddenly strikes me as being simply sickening & I haven't the heart to go on. I'll try to finish this one so that you can read it. I wish I could write something really marvellous & make wads of money - it would be lovely to make money doing something you really liked. Quite apart from that I'd like to write Mac. Ever since I was tiny I've wanted to. Then I was miserable but now just for the pleasure of letting off steam. You musn't let your painting go either. It feel its important to keep ones artistic instincts flourishing - whatever they are. It keeps a sense of proportion which ones apt to lose out here. We might combine one day - you illustrate one of my masterpieces!

The Congress business has quite calmed down – it never was much. I should think it would fizzle out everywhere soon.

Well my darling – lunch time & the post to catch which is a pretty strong combination of excuses!

Hope to get a letter to-day. Mummy got one yesterday which was very un???!

All love from us both,

Your bad-tempered but very loving Totty

?July 1942 Blyth Cottage

Darlingest, Just got your letter about your leave – I'm sorry it can't be sooner than the end of August but still we shall have longer looking forward. Darling it isn't fair not letting me come back – honestly they can't make a rule & then let ½ the people break it. It just isn't sense. Point that out to the C.O. I'm going to dig my toes in & insist, because we are in the right and I shall write to General Rich in person if the C.O. doesn't look out! He's obviously wanting his own wife out of the way & so has to say no to you, but that doesn't fool me. There are times when I refuse to be beaten. I could take a job – canteen, nursing or shorthand & typing – & live in Shillong if necessary – the Mortimers would take me. But I'm not going to be kept out when the place is full of useless women & girls without ties of any kind. And that's that – so tell the C.O. so with my love! I shall just arrive one fine morning & he can do what he likes with me after that. Honestly darling I mean it – life is too uncertain to play about with because of one mans whim.

I meant to write yesterday but 100's of people turned up at the time & I set aside & stayed till dinner & I felt too dead after that. Sorry Sweet! The 100's were actually Betty Broad & Yvonne. Betty us a changed person – its incredible – Mummy offered her orange juice or ginger ale & she pounced on the bottle of gin & consumed vast quantities of same, sparkling saucily and almost was vulgar once! She eventually tottered off saying she felt like getting drunk & where had she left the 4 dozen bottles of whisky she'd pinched from the contractor?! Poor Lady B. must be writhing in her grave. She & Pa are going home in a week or two. Mumny swore she had eye-shadow on but I can't believe that.

Yesterday afternoon I took Alan to tea with his 9-months friend and they pulled each others noses and generally enjoyed themselves. He wears his leggings now and by the time you arrive will have rompers and might be crawling. He tries desperately hard and gets so cross when nothing happens. He has lovely pink cheeks and yesterday I left him too long in the sun and he has bright brown knees, just like a big man. My new Ayah continues satisfactorily touching wood.

Mrs Marshall has just arrived from Delhi for 5 days to see Susan. She got here at 4.30 having got to Kathgodam at 7.30 A.M. Susan spends her whole time buying clothes – She has masses & masses – it seems all wrong in war-time. The Marshalls do nothing but moan about how desperately poor they too. They think they'll be given enough petrol to motor in from Meerut to Delhi every day – 40 miles each way – if they can't get a house in Delhi. Some hope!

Darling do your best about me & coming back because really it isn't reasonable is it? I mean, if you'd never asked the C.O. nobody would have known or objected. And I won't give in when I think of Phoebe Lewis & the Glass Girl & that useless crowd.

I'm counting the hours & minutes – & it'll be you who blushes when we meet darling!

Till then god bless you – Always xx Totty

?July or early August 1942 Blyth Cottage

Sweetheart,

I wrote you a long miserable letter last night because I couldn't sleep again but I've torn it up as it won't help either of us for you to read it! I was also upset as its over a week since I heard but I found out to-day that the trains haven't been since I heard but I found out to-day that the trains haven't been running via Calcutta for several days so I forgive you darling! I only pray that everything will be settled by the time you leave is due. I couldn't bear the disappointment if anything stopped you coming. Its getting so close and I can't really believe it. I shall be paralytically shy at first - its 3 whole months darling! - but once I'm in your arms it'll be alright & we'll forget we have ever been apart.

Alan is getting so interesting and very wilful - having mastered sitting he now tries fearfully hard to stand up and grabs hold of ones lapel (!) and pulls like mad and sometimes manages to get to his feet. It isn't good for him I'm sure, but he gets furiously angry if I stop him and is so sweet and serious and purple in the face. He shows very little inclination to crawl and I think he'll be one of those babies that shuffle along on their behinds and then get up and walk. He is so beautiful and has gone into bloomers and blouses and looks quite ravishing. When he has hair and teeth he'll be unparalleled.

Mummy is still in Agra enjoying the Cecil Hotel and no housekeeping. Do you remember Mrs Williams' daughter who had the baby & was so marvellous in every way? Her husband, Roffey, went out pigeon-shooting the other day & ^ loosed both barrels into his foot has had to have it amputated. Very sad as he was a marvellous rider & athletic in every way & she is just having an operation in Murree & they can't tell her. Poor Mrs Williams will be having fits.

Mummy is trying to get a bungalow in Agra to share with Patty & perhaps keep a corner for me if need be. I'm sure I'll be able to be with you though. Toinou and a friend are thinking of taking this for the winter. - Toinou's baby is due next month & Reggie will be on leave with you, won't that be nice darling! Have just had a letter from your mother which I'll enclose. Our wire, I suppose, was never sent.

Yesterday they gave another concert - by the troops which was quite amusing but not as good as the first. They did "the green eye of the little yellow god" - d'you remember telling me about it? We got involved in a peculiar party of Yvonne's with a series of slightly cockney young men in the R.I.A.S.C. but they paid for our seats which was something! One of them came from Perth & had obviously forgotten to bring his "h's" away when he left! One of the turns was an enormous blowsy female in the tightest whitest satin, unironed, who sang songs just too high for her & every time she took a deep a deep breath we held on to the edges of our chairs as we couldn't believe her dress would stand the strain! Painful.

I'm putting on weight for lack of exercise but have bought myself a skipping rope - somehow I can never get up early enough to use it but I daresay I will one day. I was woken at quarter to ten this morning!

My play is progressing slowly - its great fun to write - you must help me darling.

Still no letters getting through - I suppose it's the same your end. Never mind, its better now than later.

Must stop as I've got loads more letters to write.

I shall imagine you starting in 6 days time - lovely!



Will you please bring my white taffeta evening petticoat & that large macintosh cape?  
What about Alan's small table being crated & brought too? I'll leave you to decide.

Every bit of love & longing sweet.

Always yours, xx Iris xx

No date - ?July [first half in pencil]

Darling - it is 1 in the morning & I'm having another of my sleepless nights - I seem to have so many now & pour Asprin etc down myself without effect & get so miserable. My mind just won't stop functioning for one moment - about coming back to Shillong & whether or not to bring Alan and all the other millions of problems that loom large when one can't sleep. It is very silly I know but I'm made that way as you know. If only for the umpteenth time, you were here to comfort me & sort it all out for me. It seems an awfully long time to the end of the month just at the moment.

Do I annoy you very much the way I go on? I expect I do, like in lots of other ways. Darling keep on loving me if you can & I may improve with any luck. You & Alan make me want to terribly but nothing much seems to happen. Oh how I long to be back in our little house amongst the pine trees - the 3 of us & your "T" Coy & the motor bike. One never really appreciates anything till after I suppose.

[pen] I wonder if you can read any of that written at the dead of night. It soothes me to write to you & tell you I can't sleep as I can't dig you in the ribs as I would if you were there & stop you getting any!

I haven't had a letter for 3 days so am waiting on tenterhooks to know if you've definitely heard about leave. There's a marvellous film - "Major Barbara" - on the 28th & we've booked your seats so you must be here willy nilly. Mummy has Mah Jong party - All laughing & shrieking making it quite impossible to write sense. People do talk rubbish playing Mah Jong.

"4 Crachy-wachys"

"One little South Wind, tra-la. The South Wind doth blow & we shall have snow-snow-snow."

"Who wants a garden, a garden a ga-arden - We'll do the keel row, tra la la la la la!"

"Better and better. I'm clean. Clean as the driven snow."

"What are rings around the fingers, with rings beneath the eyes".

"Hell screamed the duchess as she waved her wooden leg".

"The dog's eathing my toes. Nobody knows tiddly pom, bow cold my toes, tiddley pom, are growing."

"I've got a pong, you've got a pong, all God's children go-hot pongs."

"Mah Jong! Ha! Ha! Hee! Hee! Clever clever clever little me!"

One wouldn't really credit grown-up women with such drivel. I should love to write a play buning in a Mah Jong party.

Mrs Cargill brought Alexander to tea with Alan to-day - Alan was a dreadfully bad host and just lay and stared at him with his mouth wide open and refused to smile or move. He used to be so sociable and now he just stares and stares at people and I do hope he shows off all his clever tricks to you. I expect he will once he's used to you and your moustache. He sits up so beautifully now and I put him into rompers to-day for the first time and he looked angelic. His hair is terribly soft and one can't do anything with it except by spitting on it profusely which is a little degrading.

The party is getting wilder & wilder & I honestly can't think. Mrs Marshall & Mrs Thompson are here and they are all talking had & fast without a breath. We must play some bridge when you come mustn't we darling?

I can hardly wait – I bet you aren't nearly as excited. Thank goodness some of the pretty girls are going – the behaviour in Naini this year is so shocking they're thinking of closing the Boat Club! Don't look at me darling!  
[rest missing]

?July 1942

My sweet – A letter to-day thank goodness. I was beginning to think this Congress business was affecting mails. So glad to hear your leave is definite darling – am I thrilled! You mustn't let yourself be delayed – I shall expect you on the 29<sup>th</sup> when we shall go to see “Major Barbara” if you aren't too weary. Darling will you bring these things with you.

My white evening coat

My black velvet evening coat.

My bright blue taffeta evening dress.

That tin thing with rubber attached & black tubes.

What about the box of books & the linen? If you think anything will happen in Shillong this winter you'd better bring those too. You can book them right to Naini from ? Pandu – small guage – so you needn't bother about them again. Will you bring the photo album too, so we can stick in the largest snaps (bring them too). If you have any time in Calcutta & can get to Machers, would you please buy me “Feeding and Management in Infancy and Childhood” by Pattison and Smyth. I think that's all. I'll tell you if I think of anything else.

Things have calmed down a bit here due to Martial Law having been declared, & shops are beginning to open again gingerly. We braved the madding crowd & went to the Cinema yesterday – actually nothing at all interesting happened & the hundreds of police guarding us looked rather foolish. Somebody went up to a little boy yesterday and said “You're very naughty to be causing all this trouble” & he said “Well Memsahib they give me As 8 a day for it. If you give me As 10 I'll stop”! They hold up pieces of cardboard with “We want our freedom” in drunken capitols over them & expect us to be impressed!

Mrs Marshall is still up here & has to stay till this is over. She is extraordinary – she never stops buying clothes & never stops telling us how posh she is – Suzanne is the same & is always borrowing bits of money without dreaming of returning it! Mummy was going to Agra to-morrow, but has decided not to as Kattagodam is in rather a turmoil.

I haven't been feeling too bright to-day & have spent it painting everything a sickly blue & washing all my stockings. Very peaceful. Yesterday we went to “The Prime Minister” – my old flame John Gielgud looking hideous as Disraeli but acting awfully well. I'm just doing nothing but wait for you now. Darling, you mustn't be hurt if Alan doesn't recognise you at first – he was very wee then and he'll soon remember. He has such lovely rosy cheeks now – I hope they survive this rain which never stops. A true Scotsman, he adores his porridge.

We call him Himpy because of the ridiculous tuft of hair on top – oh The Onion! I can't tell you how sweet he is.

Only a little longer dearest – “Bide a wee & dinna weary” as they say in some places.

Love for always & longest

**Mac to Iris**

10.7.42 [CHECK ORDER]

My darling girl,

Just a note to say that I have sent you your birthday present from Alan and myself. I hope that you will like it sweet heart. It takes all my love to you my sweet. Nothing has come thro' about my leave. I am getting quite desperate nowadays and I need a holiday badly. All jumpy and cannot concentrate on anything. By the way sweet if I cannot get away in time for your birthday and Alan christening will you please get something nice for Alan from me. Anything you think would be nice. God I wish I could get away. Really I am just sitting doing nothing. Ideal time for getting away because later we shall be busy once things start coming in.

No news expect that 5 officers of the 1st Bn are down with fever which I suppose means that we shall have to provide for them sooner or later. I saw Mortimer the other night and he said that he was going up to Naini to bring his wife back. I think darling that if nothing does happen soon that you should come back too. I can't hear this much longer and I think we might risk it. Anyway think about it and let me know what you think about it.

I got a very nice letter from the General Manger, Assam Company yesterday and I have today written down to the Accountant asking him to send my dues, whatever they are, to me as soon as possible. It will mean that we shall be absolutely clear once it does arrive. Won't it be wonderful and all because of you sweetheart. I know I could never have done it is you hadn't taken a good hold of me.

Excuse the back of this sheet of paper but someone has been doing a sword dance on it by the look of it.

Well sweetheart I shall write again tomorrow. I am being good sweetheart. I have written four times in the last five days. You must be getting up with all my letters.

My love to all

My dearest love to you and Alan and pray that I might see you sweetheart because I do every night at 0930 hrs. xxxxx Donald

10.7.42. The Assam Regiment, Shillong, Assam. [same date as above]

My darling,

I am sitting in the mess by myself with the wireless going playing some ghastly music and darling I am feeling very lonely and very lovesick. Do you mind the way I carry on but I am getting worse instead of better. I wish you were at No 4 and I was at the Jat Mess. I could come and see you, anything, anything. Darling write and tell me you love me, love me very much. The C.O. has just told me he wants to get some leave but what can we do. Impossible situation. I did not get a letter this evening. Haven't for a while now. I hope you are getting mine. I do so love yours and the way you write. What am I like. I suppose I am frightful. Like everything I seem just to miss the boat somehow. The only good thing I ever did was to have you as my little wife and Alan as my son. I never realised that I should ever get really as bad as this and only hope that we shall have years and years together always loving each other and understanding each other. I am nearly happy but only because I believe that you love me and that maybe I do make you happy. Do I darling? I mustn't go on I shall only break down all together and do something desperate. I shall finish this off tomorrow.

Darling I am afraid I missed out a day because I have been rather busy. There was a row in the bazaar and some people got knocked about. Some of our Naga on the

rampage. I have been trying to get to the bottom of the story but have not yet managed. Darling heart don't be annoyed with what I wrote above. I was feeling miserable at the time. Just like you feel sometimes. I am sure.

Yesterday we tried to play nine holes of golf in the evening but I came down in buckets and although Diana loved it we were thoroughly soaked. Nothing came through about leave yet but I have been [page missing - at top of front page] most extraordinary just had a chit from a chap who was my fag at school. Funny how people smell??. He is in the Rajputs.

-

No date. Before 22.7.

My darling,

Got two letters yesterday saying that you had not heard from me, maybe by now you will understand the reason. Sweetheart only once have I missed writing every other day.

Yes sweetheart I shall try frightfully hard to get leave but at the moment I simply can't see it. There is a definite order and no matter what the C.O. does we simply cannot get passed it. I have, as I said before, every hopes of that order being cancelled but so far nothing has happened. You know darling that there would be nothing that I could wish more for than be at the christening of Alan and your birthday and I may still do it but please don't get cross with me sweetheart if I cannot. I mean as an example one of our Gurkha officer's wife was seriously ill and he applied but could only get a week which was the time he would take to go and come back from where his wife was. Of course if anything like that happened with me I am afraid I should go for Court Martial and risk it. No darling please don't fret and I promise you I shall pull every string I can to get away in time.

I am so pleased Alan can say "Da-da". Are you sure it isn't "Ma-ma" and you are only saying t'other to make me feel good. He must simply be wonderful and I am so glad that everybody is jealous. You know that the no. of people who have told me that Alan looks exactly like you and he does. Actually nothing extraordinary about it but as I say darling he is beautiful and I burst of pride when I think of you both. I don't know but when I see anybody I know I always tell them about how you are and what Alan does. He does some of the most extraordinary things, thinks I make him do, he sits up and talks and climes out of his cradle. Do tell me all he does sweetheart.

I actually had a game of tennis yesterday and played with all these supposedly marvellous tennis players but found that after all this talk they were no better than I was. Barua is good but our "Les" and "Cooksey" were not. Stayed on at the club and played billiards with Andy and then went out to dinner at the Myres' bungalow. Quite a pleasant evening but I did miss [you]. I go into a trance sometime just thinking that you are there and then wake up with a jump and find I am just dreaming. Sweetheart I seem to love and miss you more and more every day. I really get quite desperate at times still I must not make you fed up as well. I shall see you soon darling and I am going kiss you and eat your little ears until you won't want to see me any more.

It is marvellous though, don't you think, how two persons like ourselves can be so attached to each other, for there to be such misery in our hearts when we are apart. Aching pains sometimes.

Here we are, having known each other just over a year of our lives and yet it seems that we have known each other since childhood. I am sure in some way we have and that we, just you and I, were meant for each other. But why so many unhappy marriages etc when people are meant for each other or are we just lucky. Darling do you know,

my reasoning not at its best but I have frightfully strong feelings as you well know and I can never get over this love of ours. Sometimes I seem to understand and put it down to something or other then again its quite beyond me and set up as if I wasn't supposed to understand. Sorry sweetheart if I am boring you just throw all this in the fire will you. I have told you all this before but darling I must tell you I love hyou because I do so much and you must always love me because I just wouldn't care any more and I know I would just go to the dogs and break myself [next page missing]

No date - first page(s) missing ? July 1942

... what I mean. You remember Parker, he has come up to Shillong on sick leave. He has invited Andy & myself to dinner at Pinewoods tonight which will be a change from the ration stuff we get in the Mess. You will find things very expensive up here now. At least I think they are. I don't care what they are we have plenty of money now. By the way darling talking of money. I sent Rs 300/- last month sometime and I am sending another Rs 500/- soon. This I think is going to start our little nest egg. We shall start saving in earnest now that things are clearer and see how much we can collect for going home after the war. We must have enough to buy a car and clothes and toys for Fatty and all kinds of things for my darling little girl. We want to have all the fun in world with no worries. We shall won't we darling.

Well write soon. I have had a letter for about 10 days now. I suppose as I said in my last letter it was due to your thinking I was going to arrive.

Let me know all about when you should come etc and what you think of it all.

Love to all,

All the love in the world to you and Fatty,

Yours always, Donald xxxx

23.7.1942 The Assam Regiment, Shillong

Darling heart,

Just received the photo. Darling it is lovely. Really you have no idea how I am bursting with pride. Both of you little Fatties and how I do love you. I think Fatty has grown terrifically and his hair looks simply wonderful. You have no idea how much that photo made me want leave. I shall get it eventually if I continue worrying everybody concerned as I am doing. We have not as yet shifted out to Elephant Falls so until we do I cannot press but as soon as we do I really am going to insist on getting leave as it is affecting my work and my outlook on everything. I just feel that a really good rest with you and Alan would make the world of different and I could get some work done. I feel so listless these day and with you not here I get frightfully bored and restless. Sorry darling to worry you with all these details but I am simply dying to get on leave. Just received your letter where you refused to go out to a dance. Funny thing darling I feel exactly the same as you do. I don't feel as if I want to entertain anybody and I don't want to talk to anybody because I can never talk about things that I am interested in and be sure that someone is listening even though it might be a lot of rubbish. Nothing is the same. No darling I will make it yet. LEAVE or BURST. You will come to dances etc with me sweetheart won't you. Or maybe you don't want the boys to see your poor husband!!

I am sitting my Higher Urdu examination in two months time. I have sent my name in and I sincerely hope that I pass it. I think I will actually. Cooksey has just

passed his Elementary but 'Les' has failed!! Goodness knows what happens to him now. "Pharoah" as they call it has not arrived yet which seems a bit late. Of course I wouldn't be knowing but 'Les' seems to be a bit worried.

You know I always harp on this leave business but last night I was dreaming I had arrived in Naini and that you and I were running down the main street with Alan singing and laughing and throwing flowers from baskets. Don't quite get the connection (the flowers I mean) still I suppose it is the thought which running through my mind most of having a good time while I am on leave.

Well darling I will write again. Give my love to all.

Love, kisses & hugs to you and Alan,

Always yours, Donald

28.7.1942 Assam Regiment, Shillong

My darling,

I am afraid I did not write yesterday as I intended because I was so busy! Darling of course come on the 15th but the trouble is I have been making such a row about leave that now the order is on its way I am afraid the C.O. will make me take it. With any luck at all ~I should be able to leave in about two weeks time from now. I shall then ask the C.O. if [he] does not mind me bringing you back. Believe it or not there is still an order about bringing wives into Shillong although everybody including the General seems to be disobeying it as fast as they can. I have written to the bankers today and asked them to send over some money to you. We have got tons nowadays darling. Don't know quite what to do with it all. We shall have a good leave anyway. Darling you are rude saying that you want to laugh at my 'mouche'. It is a lovely one now and beginning to curl up at the ends. I know you would like it. Shant we have a battle royal about it. People say it makes me look very old. Quite possibly but I must look the part of Adj[utant] even if I don't act like one.

I have been concentrating very hard on my Urdu which I must pass. I have met an awfully nice fellow here. He is actually the B. Major and was in Billys Bn. Name of James Robinson. Awfully nice. He was telling me all about Staff College and what one has to do. I should love to go just for the experience. He said the C.O. should give me a chance having now done Adjutant for over a year. But darling I would like to see a bit of active service first. I know I would be alright and then come back to S.C. and then get a staff job somewhere. Never know I may have some luck soon.

[second page missing]

31.7 1942 Assam Regiment, Shillong

Darling heart,

I am just waiting for the C.O. to come down and ask him about leave. The order has a[t] last come thro' and I am coming now if I bust. By the way I got your letter saying that you were coming here at the beginning of the month. I asked the C.O. and he said he was very sorry but it was against orders. Now as you know darling this is true and I know what you are going to say that Mrs Mortimer came up and all kinds of wives have come up. The C.O. also realises this but he says he will not go against the order. His wife has evidently asked to come up but he won't let her. I don't know if this is because he is having a good time without or not but he will not budge and all he said was the A.Q. would be up and he would put the matter up to him so when he does I shall



personally see him. You have no idea how much this disappointed me but I cannot help it. I have sworn and cursed but what good does it do. I think everything is impossible and I don't know where to turn. I know this place might be dangerous later on but just now there seems to be no reason at all for you not coming. Anyway if you do I agree about leaving Fatty. It would be better considering that he does have to have all that attention etc and I think the journey again would be too much for you. We have not yet moved out to E.F. but hope to do so in the near future. We shall absolutely be stuck there because we are not allowed the staff cars any more and taxis will not come out there. You know what Mr Sherifs is charging these days. Rs 10/- each way if you please and nobody will stop him.

Still if you come up we shant want to go anywhere. C.O. has just arrived and here I go darling. Pray for me. By God if I don't get it.... Have seen him and it is O.K. sweetheart. Better than nothing anyway. He wants me to wait until Andy comes back from his course which is about the 20th of August and then he is going to take over my job for the time being and I shall leave as soon as possible after that. Darling don't be disappointed. I am coming now definitely and maybe by that time I shall be trying to bring you back with me for a while. Actually I can hardly believe I am going. I am just drying for the day I drive up to Naini in the car and see you waiting, I hope, at the end of the Lake sweetheart. You won't blush if I kiss you a lot will you. I bet you won't come down now that I have said that.

Really I think it would be better all round, though, me coming there then, because I can see Fatty and we can fix up what we are going to do this winter and darling all kinds of things. I can hardly wait and all the letters I send from now on will be full of it.

I have just sent you a wire saying that I would be coming just in case you suddenly decide to depart.

Well sweetheart thing just another few weeks. Do you think that we can wait. I think so. So much to look forward to.

My love to all. Fondest and dearest love to you & Fatty. Hugs & kisses, Donald

P.S. Will write and ask your mother if she can put me up.

No date - ?July 1942

My darling,

What a lovely picture of Fatty. Just like you. I have showed most people in the Regt and they all say how extraordinarily like you it is. He is sweet darling isn't he. Things are looking brighter and brighter here. General Rich is going to revise the leave rules which he put on only to get the Burma people through. So darling you can expect me any time. What fun we are going to have. Just the three of us. I can hardly wait. No darling I think it would be silly just a[t] present coming here because nobody knows what the Japs are doing and until we start pushing them back I should stay put dazzling. Not that I don't want you but I should hate it if any thing should happen.

I played 36 holes of golf yesterday. Went to the Golf Club at about nine played eighteen holes had sandwiches and beer (they have some now) and then played another eighteen. Felt dog tired. I took Diana round with me and she simply loved it all. I went to the Club Sunday evening with the C.O. He is getting frightfully fed up with things in general and we still are getting nothing and seem to be getting nowhere.

General Rich came out and inspected the whole Bn on Saturday. I had to roar out orders, march half the length of the parade ground and report to him the nos. on parade. By the time I got to him I was breathless and quite hoarse so God knows what

he thought of my croaking and panting. He actually is very nice and said he thought we had a fine lot (Not much use as I have said if there is no means with which to really be good. However I hope the censor does not grab this).

Well I am giving my 'mouche' another week and then off it comes unless things improve a lot. The situation is critical! MORE hairs one side than t'other [second page missing].

No date - July or August 1942

My darling,

I have simply been rushed off my feet lately and have had no time to write for a few days, really. I am not making any excuses but we have started for E.F. and the work for a change is colossal. I hope by now anyway that you have received my wire darling. I think honestly darling that it is better idea that I should come and then the order will probably be finished and I shall be able to bring you back with me. I can then see you a[n] Fatty and get a bit of a holiday, which you may not think, I badly need. I am getting frightfully stale these days and don't seem inclined to do anything. It means anyway sweetheart that I shall see you about three weeks after you get this which will be wonderful. Darling I shall make love to you all day too. You just wait. You have no idea. I shall feel a bit of a stranger myself. It is years ago since I saw you I know darling Fatty is wonderful and it is all because of you really. I don't admit these things very often but there it is. I think I can safely hand it to you as you were not within sight and I can't see your head swelling. I only hope that he recognises me. Do you think he will.

Excuse this frightful writing but I am taking an Urdu Exam at least I am supervising an exam and one or two youths are puzzling their heads and looking quite lost. Just like me I suppose when I took it. Its rather fun. I often wondered what my school masters used to think when they were taking an exam. Actually I don't know whether I should stand up or sit down or walk about twiddling my "mouche". I decided as you no doubt see to write to you. I have three hours to do it in so I hope you won't be tired with this rigmarole. How do you spell "rigmarole".

By the way I got that book from Mrs Mortimer the other day and so far as I have got I love it. Don't you think? I am taking it very slowly as it is very hard to get any reading material up here now. Thank you very much indeed darling it was very good of you.

By the way about this leave of mine. What do you want me to bring you. Give me a list and I shall bring it along. Not too much darling as you know my little fad about parcels, cats and railways!

I have got everything packed now but somehow or other we seem to have piles of packing cases left over. I don't know what was in them all? Anyway let me know what you want and I shall get the things out. You gave me one list I know but I am afraid I couldn't have been a very complete one??

Bruno has just arrived up here on leave and seems very fit and full of beans. I believe I told you before that he has made quite a name for himself and the Bn. Rather good show although I did not think that Bruno had it in him. Funny you know I saw Mrs Bruno yesterday and she didn't even know that Bruno was coming and he arrived up here and went straight passed Elephant Falls where as you know Mrs Brown is and hasn't gone back yet still running about his work etc. What would you do if I was to do that! I have, actually, quite a good ideal.

Darling I have missed the post and have brought the letter back to my room to finish off. I am just going to get down to a spot of Urdu. I cannot concentrate on it but I shall try hard If you were only here you could help me I know. I am just looking at the

photos of you and I can hardly believe that I shall be seeing you both soon. Wonderful. As I said before I shall harp on this subject until you get quite bored with me. These parties by the way sound terrific. Are you trying to get off with some one. Oh yes is that man out here. Honestly sweet I am frightfully jealous as you know and shall be frightfully rude, a la Bosun if I smelt him and he tries to have any of his long chats with you about the world and whats wrong with it. Reading that over it sounds rather nasty but it is not really meant to be but you must tell me that you love me more than him and will always. Darling heart if you ever made even the slightest suggestion like that it would hit me very hard and very deep too. You have just no idea how much I love you and how much I covet you and all that belongs to you my sweet. Enough you are probably saying "Don't be silly Mac" and also you may be annoyed at my suggesting such a thing. I shall kiss you all the more, so there! Serenade, Yes I have the gramophone going, whisky peg in my hand and I am very much in love.

By the way Joan Davis has had a son and 'Les' is running round in small circles. Actually I hope them the best as we have such a nice Fatty I should hate to wish any one anything else. He bought me a whisky soda on the strength of it. I don't feel kind him just for that though!

Well my sweet I have written a lot of rubbish. I hope you don't mind.

My love to all and my dearest love to you and Fatty and expect me soon.

Yrs always & always. Donald.

## AUGUST

### Iris to Mac

? August 1942

My darling, I've sent off the fateful wire to-day & I'm hoping this'll be one of the last letters I have to write. If you say "no" I can't come I shall send more & more pathetic wires - and I shall go into the most colossal sulks you ever imagined. Darling we mustn't waste any more time - it is so precious these days - it doesn't matter if you're in the middle of moving, I can sleep or eat anywhere or not at all. Please please let me come. If you're taking your Higher Urdu it would be just as well for you not to get leave now & I can help you & then if nothing happens you can get leave then. I shall really think you don't want me if you don't let me come now!

Herewith the snaps of the christening and some others - rather sweet aren't they? I'm having some enlargements. Darling he can sit up by himself now! He looks so adorable sitting up in his basket and peering over the frills and is terribly proud of himself, my new Ayah is a perfect gem and so hard-working. Alan loves her. He has lovely pink cheeks and his legs and arms are getting beautifully fat and dimpled. I adore him so.

Nothing to report since I last wrote except that I have a tummy upset & am having Epsom Salts poured down me which is depressing. Mrs Cargle came to tea & she thinks of coming back to Shillong too but is under the impression that September is cooler than August to travel. I have disillusioned her & she might come with me.

My sweetheart, soon we'll be together again & I feel quite sick with excitement about it. I will try to be nice to you and not lose my temper & make it worth the expense of having me back. Truly I will.

I'm dead tired so forgive this uninteresting scrawl.

Kisses from your grown-up son -  
And all my love till we meet, dearest heart xx Totty xx

[in pencil] I had a horrible dream about you last night - when I came back I found you didn't care for me any more!

**Mac to Iris**

**AUGUST**

No date - August

[first page missing]

Assam Regiment, Shillong

... I agree entirely with what Billy says about the CO. He is extremely lazy I have found out and has a very biting tongue. He has never used it on me and he has never spoken behind my back as far as I know because I am very frank with him and I would go up in the air if he tried anything on me. I am tough darling?!

Darling so pleased Alan is following Daddy's and Mummy's footsteps 18" round the chest!!! No, it is very good sweetheart. I should love to see him gurgling his food down. I shall anyway very soon. I wonder if he will remember me. When does Richard arrive? He should have done by now.

Of course I don't object darling at putting James in the name. What was his Christening like. Did anyone take any photos of it. Please let me know all about it wont you darling.

Well sweetheart no news. I shall send you a wire either tomorrow or day after to say that I am getting my leave and then I shall see you again. I can hardly wait.

All my love to all,  
Kisses & hugs to you & Fatty (Dumbo),  
Yours always, Donald

12.8.42 Welsh Mission Hospital Shillong. [to Violet]

Excuse this vile paper and my writing. The Orderly is to blame for the paper.

Dear Mother,

What a time and especially what a trying time it must have been for you. I am really grateful and am sorry that you have been put to so much trouble and worry. It was all a most remarkable coincidence wasn't it? You have probably heard of it all from Iris. I felt perfectly alright but a bit depressed when I got Iris's letter saying that she had appendicitis and was feeling pretty miserable. Next day I had terrible pain inside and stayed in bed. This had no effect and the pain got worse. I decided myself to go to hospital and the doctor decided to do the operation right away. I am afraid I had no time in letting you know and I asked one of my friends to send a wire once the operation was over. I hope it arrived and you were able to sort out the puzzle. I have fixed up with the doctor that I get a months sick leave and I hope I shall be up in Naini about the 1st week in October. I get a month and instead of ten days which is one

consolation. How about Iris. I hope she has fully recovered and did not have too bad a time. She is very brave and I have no doubt it did not trouble her very much. Don't tell her that she will be furious. I shall have to think up all kinds of things to say about "My OP" although she will probably crush me in the end. I am so glad Alan is so fit. I am just dying to see him and his antics. In fact I am dying to see you all and it won't be long now. My bearer has arrived and I shall give him this to post. Thanks for the trouble you have taken.

All my love, Donald

No date - August 1942 [after operation]

My darling,

Got a letter from you yesterday and you seemed quite happy. By now you will have practically recovered and we shall be together very soon. By the way darling I am very annoyed about this man Sherridan. He has no right to be rude to you and if I had been there I should have told him so in more than one way. What does he think he is anyway. Little Pup I could strangle him quite easily just now. Don't you stand any more lip from him and tell him that he will have to answer to me if he does. I am furious. Well sweetheart I am O.K. now and it is just a question of time. The wound which is bigger than yours!!?? Has healed up as far as I can see and the Doctor seems very pleased with it. The coincidence of you and I both have our operations for the same things is the topic of hospital. You get very good treatment here I must say. The food is very good, rather sloppy but I don't mind baby food so I am alright. I was very amused at the way you described Alan, alias Fatty alias HIMPY eating his meal. I am glad he enjoys his food and he will be a great strong boy soon. Give him all the things he requires by the bucketful if necessary. As a boy I always ate my head off. Not so much of the boy, says you, what about now. Well darling I don't do too badly I will admit.

Last night after I went to sleep and in my dreams I went to you darling and think what we did. We planned a house. It is still in my mind so I am drawing it on a sheet and see what you think of it. I have it all taped and there is only one thing required? Anyway I always think that if you dream and plan a thing long enough we shall eventually get our wish. Here is the plan of our little estate.

[see SKETCH]

Now the sitting room and the dining room would have no partition only step leading up to the dining room. The whole house would be made of old oak books and the rooms about 10 ft high. Upstairs naturally we would have our own bedroom and the nursery for all the children?? Beside this I should like 100 acres of rough shooting and a small burn running through. We would have a specially made station wagon so that we could go away anywhere and camp for a few days. This place must be fairly near a town where we could beat it up when we thought necessary. Darling do you think that I am mad writing and thinking of things like that. I spend most of the day doing so. I know you would be so happy and that is all that I want. I have a feeling that someday we will have all these things and so we might as well plan them now. You let me have your version of things and then we shall get some real plans out and wish and wish. There is really nothing more to say darling so bye bye until tomorrow. All my love and I hope all is well. I love you. I love you

Xxxx Yours ever and ever xxxx Donald

14.8.42 Hospital

My darling,

Well another day and another day closer to you. I have not heard from you since you had your operation and sent the wire. I hope that all is well and I have sent one or two wires saying I am alright. I hope to have the stitches taken out in a day or two and I shall be allowed to get up. I shall feel thankful. Ones back gets so sore and I am just like you I lie awake at night and cannot sleep properly. I was always restless but this takes the biscuit and one does get so tired.

Another fellow has come in the room with me. A large Red headed Irishman. Good fellow. Absolutely wild of course and has been all over the world. Hong Kong escaped from Singapore in a boat. Now he wants to join the 'V' Force. He is in here with the most extraordinary thing. While he was motorcycling along the road he passed some coolies. As a bullock cart was coming from the other direction he did not have much room and brushed up against the coolies. As he did so he felt a prick on his leg but thought nothing of it. When he got off his bike he couldn't stand. He had his leg Ex Rayed and they found a fish bone about three inches long in the middle of his leg. He remembered afterwards that the coolies were carrying dried fish to the market and a bit must have accidentally lodged itself in it. Fancy being all through the wars he has and a think like that happening. I enclose a short letter from Alan to us. He seems very happy with his new job. Had some lovely flowers sent down from Government House yesterday. Getting quite pally with Lady Clay ???

Well darling there is no more news and again I am just living for the day when we are together again. My how much I do.

My love to you darling and Alan Macfarlane Yours always & always, Donald

21.8.42

My darling,

What can I do! Four more days and I should have left that is on the 25th and what should happen but all leave has to be stopped. Darling isn't it awful I nearly broke down when I heard. The order is that all leave in the Eastern Army has been stopped until further notice. I can't compete. The railways are all down and nobody can get through. No mail is coming through and I haven't had a letter for a week which I know must be the railways. Darling I feel so helpless and fed up. I can't put my mind to anything and I just go for long walks and 'mope' the whole time. I had everything ready and sanction had been accorded by District, and everything was lovely. I did not send a wire because I knew you would have been so upset and I think its better to explain like this. The only consolation is that as soon as it is open again, leave I mean I can get away the same day as the leave I have been sanctioned lasts for three months. Jacobs rang up yesterday, he is A.D.C. to General Goddard and said that the General didn't think it would last for more than a few days. I hope to God that he is right. I'll come soon darling as soon as I can. Please don't be too despressed because it only makes me feel very bad myself and God only knows what I am like just now. The C.O. thank goodness is trying to do something about it in the way of getting first hand information as to when leave does open and I have told Jacob that he must wire as soon as he hears and he will probably know before a lot of people. Of course I might be able to leave on the 25th yet. Anyway I hope so. I shall bring you up from Bareilly. If you hear the phone going about 7 o'clock in the evening you will know it is me and darling I do hope its soon. Gosh I have got a fit of the blues. I must cheer up and just think that I am going on leave very shortly.



I am sorry about this moan darling and I shall try and stop. I have been working fairly hard these days as the C.O. seems to get lazier and lazier. Billy was right he is the laziest man I have ever met. He stops work at 12.30 everyday and then you don't see him any more. I got a nasty crack at him the other day he said "Mac you are taking and making too many decisions, which I should do, in this Bn." I told him that when there was a hasty decision to be made he was never there. Rather shook him and he stayed till one o'clock the next day but has now gone back to his old habits. He was sleeping evidently! I have been very quiet these days and haven't been out of the lines except for walks and riding. I have set my heart on passing this Urdu examination and I am going to do it willy nilly. I only wish you were here to help me. I was only thinking last night how much I needed you darling and what a mess I would make of myself if I ever were for some reason to love you. Why these terrible thoughts I don't know. I love you so much that at times I seem to feel you near me and sometimes I say aloud 'Iris' or 'Totty' just to see what it sounds like and to see what happens. I suppose darling you should be thinking me crackers but I cannot help it and it is all your fault really and you cannot blame me. How is my boy darling. Write and tell me all about him and yourself and what you do when you play with him which you must do nowadays.

Well darling heart I leave you much depressed but hoping that all will be well soon. My love to all,

Yours always, always, always xxxx Donald xxxx

27.8.42

Darling,

Still no news about leave opening but I believe things are a lot quieter and that I shall be along any day now. I hope sweetheart that that you are not too disappointed and just think that I shall be with you soon. Actually if all have done according to plan I should have left Calcutta this morning for Bareilly. Still everybody in Eastern Army are suffering the same plight so I really cannot grumble too much and anyway what the good of grumbling. I shall get away eventually I know. I am just looking forward to the day.

Things very quiet here and I am working about three hours a day at my Urdu which I must pass. Every time I do any I feel that it more and more impossible and difficult. The C.O. these days is not really well and does not work as a consequence and I have to I should rather a lot not that I really mind it but it does get a bit much sometimes. Especially if you are not here to look after me darling. I haven't been in the Club now for weeks and have no intention of doing so. I hate the place now and without to dance with I just give it up and play, if I do go, billiards all night. One of Andy's girl friends is up just now and he is running round like a hen on hot bricks. This is wife no 4 I believe. Anyway he is feeling extremely sorry for himself this morning as he had far too much to drink. I found him hidden in a wood this morning trying to get rid of that awful feeling!

Had a long letter from 'Pop' Parker and he seems very well. Bit fed up with the job although he is getting double pay for doing it!! Some people have all the luck. It is our turn soon! Wonder what it will be.

Shillong is getting really lovely now darling and I am going to get going with my paints soon. Some of the sunsets and landscapes are really beautiful. I can never get down to it though. You will have to be here I think before I will do it.

Well my sweet I have really nothing else to tell you except that I love you so much and I really miss you so much. I really feel quite ill thinking about it. However there are happy times to come.

My love to all,  
Fondest and dearest love to Alan and yourself  
Xxxxx Donald

**ALAN CHRISTENING JULY 1942**









## 17 NAINI TAL: SEPTEMBER 1942 (Appendicitis etc)

This covers the period before Iris left me and went back to Assam to nurse Mac, when they were both in hospital etc.

### DIARIES

#### Violet

29.8 Iris went to hospital

5.9 Saw Iris 6.30

6.9 Iris operation

12 September Alan - 15 lb, 5 oz

19<sup>th</sup> September - 15 lb 10 and three quarters oz

28 September - 16 lb

### LETTERS

#### SEPTEMBER

##### Iris to Mac

29.8.42

Oh Mac darling, It can't be true that you're not coming. I was just expecting you to walk in any moment when I got your letter & it has broken my heart. Now I feel you'll never get leave & the future looks unutterably black. Mac, if you really cant get leave you must let me come back. Just for a little. You must. I wish to God I'd come when I'd first thought of it - why I ever left I don't know. There are lads here who come up on leave every month.

Darling I don't want to make you depressed, but I'm so unhappy I can't help it. Please come soon.

I'm in bed at present with appendicitis and feeling pretty low. Now that you're not coming I may decide to have them out, the doctor says I ought to but I was going to wait till you'd gone. I don't know what to do. I should have to go over to Ranikhet as the hospital here is so expensive - tell me what to do. I dread the thought. I seem to have spent most of this year in bed or hospital don't I?! If there's a chance of your coming I'll leave it for now.

I can't think of anything to tell you as I've done nothing lately. I'll write a proper letter to-morrow when I feel better about everything. I'm right at the bottom of the black pit just now.

Alan is very well & looking lovely.

xxxx Goodbye my darling - Always yours - Iris.

before 1.9.1943

Darling - Am going to hospital this evening to see if I must have my appendix out. Don't worry - I'll wire if I'm having them and get your leave after that if possible. Don't fret about me darling - it's only a little thing - really.

Must bet ready to go. I'll be fit again by the time you get this.

All love, sweet - totty



End August or very early September from Ramsey Hospital

Darling one -

Two letters from you which cheered me up no end. I'm still very disappointed about your leave but it seems my jolly old appendix have got to come out willy-nilly. So it's perhaps just as well you aren't here now to see me go through another nasty phase.

Listen darling - you must postpone leave till after the operation unless you think there is any doubt of getting it later. I'm sending you a wire to-day to tell you this in case you suddenly decide to come - I'll send you another after the operation & possibly another still saying I'm going to be operated on in case you can get compassionate leave! So don't get flustered - it won't mean two operations. Do you follow? If you think that leave will be stopped later then take it now - otherwise wait till I'm fit again. I'm not enthusiastic about this business, but resigned. It is lucky I've got someone to leave Alan with. I miss him so much. The days in hospital are bearable, but the nights are so long as I can't sleep and lie awake hour after hour feeling so miserable and wanting you so terribly. I can almost feel you sometimes - perhaps at the same time you are wanting me too & imagining I am in your arms. Do you ever imagine that? Every night I talk to you before I go to sleep, & lately when I haven't slept I have stayed with you all night. But you're not as close as I wish you were darling. If anything happened to you I think I would die.

Time passes slowly here, slower than when I've been in hospital before. I read & writ alternatively and make my scanty meals last as long as possible. The matron cheered me a lot by saying "I don't think you realizes how ill you've been" which made me feel highly interesting and raised my condition from "Oh just a bit of an appendix you know" to "Acute appendicitis my dear". Actually I haven't been nerly as bad as they all seem to think.

I've just finished my lunch (fish cream & baked custard!) & am wondering whether to sleep now or not. It is such a long time to tea & visiting time - if I have any visitors. I think I'll go on writing my play while I'm here except I feel lazy & brainless. It is very naughty of you Mac to read my things when I wasn't looking - very naughty. I shall keep everything locked away in future, you see!

Oh darling I feel so depressed - I can't help it. Write to me often now I'm in bed. I can't think of anything to tell you but I will to-morrow. Just now everything has come to an end.

All love dearest one - xxx Totty

Around September 8<sup>th</sup> 1942(after Appendix operation) from 1<sup>st</sup> Hospital

Darling - I'm afraid I didn't write yesterday because I really felt deathly, but have perked up & feel quite human again to-day. It wasn't the pain but M & B two-hourly day & night & nothing else. To-day I have been promoted to cauliflower soup & baked custard for lunch & a dry biscuit with one cup of tea - they tasted like caviarre to me (whatever that does taste like!). The doctor here is a moody little man called Sheridan - he was in a frightful temper yesterday that I hadn't come in earlier & stood & shouted at me till I could have screamed & slapped his face. He said I should have come in when the pain started & I was lucky not to have died of Peritonitis & from his tone implied he wished I had just to serve me right! I was feeling so ill at the time I couldn't think of anything to say, but afterwards though of lots of biting remarks I wished I'd made. I

wonder why doctors can be so rude & get away with it. He was quite amiable again to-day. This is a nice hospital, very clean & sunny & the sisters are sweet. They are most of them slightly "of the country" but so much pleasanter than the average superior English trained nurses. No ayahs messing around you either. I'm on a special bed they wind up either end so I'm continually propped up - it's alright till you want to sleep - this afternoon I wriggled down flat & slept solidly & dreamt you'd get your leave after all & was furious when a bushy bright nurse came & pulled me up & washed me vigorously, making gay conversation about how lovely the day had turned out after all. The night nurse is a darling & we have lovely juicy conversations about having babies & gory operations - she is one of 7 sisters all of whom appear to have had unique & terrible times with their insides!

Mummy and Suzanne come every day and yesterday they brought Himpy too - he should have been sleeping poor sweet and kept burying his head in my shoulder, the corners of his mouth going down and down. Also a Rumanian girl (the one who asked me to the "teeny tiny party" brought me lots of flowers & told me the horrors of having your appendix out. I'm reading an amusing book just now called "Warning to Wantons" & yesterday finished one about a snake farm which made me feel sicker than ever!

No letter from you for 2 days. Please write often to make up for not being here, darling.

All love & I'm still hoping. If you really can't get leave, would you be allowed a weekend in Calcutta?

Hugs & kisses my dearest -

Yours only - Totty

September 10<sup>th</sup> 1942 (fourth day after operation on 6<sup>th</sup> September)

My darling one - I've just got your letter saying I can come back and am so excited I must write a line, although I still feel queerly weak. Darling how simply wonderful. When the Congress trouble is over I would sure be fit enough to travel and then I can come. Couldn't I bring Alan though? It will be rather a nuisance for Mummy (though of course she will do it) as she will be moving into tents in Agra. It would be rather a tight fit for all 3 of us, but I don't think that would matter. Anyway I'm coming whatever happens.

Well this is the 4th day since My Operation & I'm just beginning to think perhaps life is livable after all! As you probably know my appendix Suddenly flared up again & they operated in about ½ an hour. It was awful, I nearly died of fright before & when I came round - phew! I'd rather have a baby! Mummy was wonderful & held my hand the first two days which were so ghastly I can't think about them. Mine was a very special appendix (naturally!) & had gone septic so they had to leave the wound open & drain the poison out by a tube & that was why it hurt so. They took the tube out to-day finally & I feel better. The doctor dresses me every day - an intriguing performance in which he pulls the coverings off my mound (they always stick) pulls out the tube, squeezes firmly to see if there is anything septic, & then shoves another tube in. Do I hit the ceiling! I watch him do it all & it is amazing to think that they can carve you up & then clip you together again! He is a very clever doctor & the nurses are so kind, which helps a lot. But no getting away with "Oh she had a very East Time" this time, darling! He says my appendix has signs of several earlier attacks on it, so probably that accounts for all my troubles. To-day I've had my first food (soup & bread & butter) & I slept for the first time last night so life is cheering up. My only trouble now is wind or flatulence

as they politely call it here which rushes round the tender place without a pause. Anyway I expect you've had enough of my troubles. I hope you weren't worried by the wires & things – it was all so sudden that was the trouble. When you think of the old days where nothing was clean & they cut you from top to toe!

It is difficult to know when to say I can come as travelling still seems risky & anyway I don't expect I'll be allowed to for a week or so after I leave hospital. If you get a chance of leave darling, do take it, & then you could take me back. Otherwise I'll come at the very first opportunity & wire if necessary. I'm in here for another week about (I hope!) & I will talk over the question of Alan with Mummy & we'll come to some decision. How lovely it will be darling – safe in your arms again without worries or pains or loneliness.

I am very tired so no more for now. I'm coming as soon as I possibly can but take your leave if you can get it darling.

All love for always my sweet, Totty

11<sup>th</sup> September 1942 Hospital

My poor darling! So you've had this beastly thing done to you too. I got your wire this morning and couldn't believe my eyes as your operation must have been about the same time as mine, isn't it terribly odd? I feel that it is because we are so close to each other in every way – a sort of telepathy. We even know what each others insides are doing! It must be that, don't you think? Darling, I hope you didn't have a bad time & that you are quite fit again. We can fully sympathize with each other anyway! It helps me, when I'm in pain now, to think that you have been through it all with me. I should have been worried to death if I'd known before about you & I'm anxiously waiting for more news. I'm not sending you a wire as they are rather frightening. Anyhow you are sure to get sick leave after this, when you are strong enough to travel. Don't exert yourself in any way after you get out, you will be feeling very run down. Do take great care of yourself darling.

I'm still feeling not-so-good cos of my silly tube – while that is in my wound can't heal, but they must "drain" me properly, and you should see all the stuff that they get out of me every day. Its intriguing. I'm not allowed visitors except Mummy & I don't feel strong enough to read so my life has just become a waiting to be washed & dressed & fed & washed & dressed again. I've been in a fortnight now! Are they kind to you in hospital? I hope so, & I hope people come & see you. How did you like the chloroform? We shall be able to compare notes & say how much worse I was than you, to each other!

I will try to write every day – yesterday I felt abysmal as they put me onto M & B again. At last I refused flatly to take any more & they all rushed round in small circles & gave me morphia to keep me quiet & haven't mentioned M & B again! So I feel better. But oh my! The "flatulence"!

Patty is up again – their dog was run over & in trying to save it she got one hand badly bitten so she is a bit of an invalid too.

Am very weary so no more dearest. Get better quickly & I'll try to too – & take care of yourself my sweet. I'm so sorry this had to happen to you. Poor old Porky!

All love – I'm thinking of you day & night.

For ever – Totty

mid-September 1942

Dearest One – I wonder how you are – quite fit again I hope. I wish we could get in touch quicker, it is very worrying isn't it? I expect you are out of hospital by now, but do remember to go very slow darling – operations take it out of you.

It is exactly a week since I was “done” & to-day I have felt consciously better for the first time which is a great relief. I was beginning to think I would never feel well again! I still have my tube but they took the clips out yesterday & with luck they'll remove it in a day or two. Once it is out I shall feel a different person. If you're leave hadn't been stopped we'd probably both have been corpses now as you'd have had your attack in the train and I wouldn't have gone into hospital and that apparently would have been the end of me. So it wasn't quite such a disaster really! After this if you can get leave you must take me back – I think it will be alright to take Alan don't you? Otherwise I will come and then we can come back for Christmas leave and collect him. He is looking very sweet but is not putting on weight and is very underweight – he seems to get enough to eat and is So Contented, I can't think what it is. He gets bread and butter now which he loves apparently. He has stood up by himself too – at least pulled himself to his feet and swayed about for a couple of minutes, hanging onto his pen!  
[rest missing]

c. 20<sup>th</sup> September 1942 (been in hospital 3 weeks – went in on 29<sup>th</sup> August) – ?Naini

My darling sweet – This is the first evening I haven't had visitors & I'm feeling rather cross, but I've been in 3 weeks to-day so I've been spoilt really! My eyes are dropping out of my head knitting & reading all day & my behind is getting very tired of being interminably sat on! But I have high hopes of getting up for a bit to-morrow & then a day or two later I'll be out. I hope you'll be staring soon – I still feel something awful will happen to put you off coming & I shan't be happy till I can feel you with my hands & know you're here.

The rains are still on here, but they must have stopped by the time you come and we'll be able to go on picnics and rides. Can you sail a boat? Anyway we'll have a lovely lovely time and Himpy will adore having a Daddy again. He came to see me yesterday and was in terrifically high spirits, rolling about the bed and shrieking with laughter – we couldn't do a thing with him. His latest idea is to laugh in the most idiotic affected way at anything he feels we're doing to amuse him – sort of “Her-her-her” all down the scale – it makes me quite hysterical! He has put on 5 ozs this week which is as much as he did in the last month and we're very pleased. I am knitting him a sweater and leggings in pale yellow for the winter – he has several suits now in all colours and looks so grown up in his little trousers.

I had some visitors after all – a couple called Gowdie in the ?Dogias – or were. They've just come from Shillong – she was working in the Cypher Office – very sweet looking with the bluest eyes – he was at Happy Valley. They had no trouble on the journey apparently. I knew them here 2 years go, or was it 3, anyway I didn't know who they were at first. They had a baby & lost it at 7 months I believe. She says she saw you once in Shillong & remembers you because you were wearing battle-dress. Its funny all the people I'm bumping into this year who I haven't seen for ages & ages.

The old man next door is still alive & I'm praying he'll pull through – though why God should take any notice of me I can't imagine, as I never pray except when I want something! I'm also praying very hard you'll be here at the end of this month so you must see to that even if God doesn't! I've just taken a peep at my wound & there's till a hole there – I wish it would hurry & heal. I was apparently lucky not to have got abcesses & things which is mild consolation.

Well darling darling – no more for to-night. I love you so much.  
Hugs and kisses from us both & keep well. Always. Totty.

c. 21 September 1941 [Hospital]

Darling,

Mummy didn't come to-day so I couldn't post this – I will add a bit more. I've got a letter from you, enclosing Alan's. You didn't sound quite so cheerful, I expect you were a bit fed up – I don't blame you, I've been in this place 3 weeks & 2 days now! Anyway by this time all will be well & everything comes to an end. I'm very encouraged to hear the journey from Shillong is quite simple & you'll probably only take the usual 4 days. I'm definitely coming back with you – so we can know that it won't be just a month with another separation hanging over us. Everybody is returning to Shillong & there are lots of women there I hear. So your affair with Lady C.O.'s?? Will have to come to a swift end darling!

I got up for the 1st time to-day & staggered a few steps, my legs feeling very cotton-wooly. They will probably let me out on Thursday – to-day being Monday – so life is brightening. I'm sorry you can't sleep sweet – it is vile isn't it – but we shall both be alright when we're together again. My scar is about 3 1/2" long. I bet it beats yours. Hurry & come to me darling, I want you so much. Xxx Bless you! Xx

22.9.42 [Hospital]

My sweetheart,

Two letters to-day – they always come in pairs. I'm sorry they sent you that silly thing about being dangerously ill – it's something to do with "the military" (as they refer to us here, rather scornfully!) & it must have been a bit of a worry. Actually I think they were afraid of worse complications than actually took place & I was a bit ill for a few days but not as bad as all that. I did delay too long coming in – partially my fault & partly staff surgeons. He is a mental specialist & quite blank about anything else. His attitude was "It would be quite a good thing to have it out now, but you can wait if you like so", as I was expecting you, I naturally decided to wait. When I got your letter & the pain hadn't subsided after two days, I thought I'd come in here. By that time they'd decided not to operate till I'd got over this attack, & after 5 or 6 days I was on normal diet when my temperature suddenly started to mount & the pain crept back & that was that!

To-day has been lovely – I was allowed to lie on a couch, basking in the sun & there was a lovely ?romping breeze that ruffled the lake & sent all the little yachts skudding about like scraps of white paper. It is high on a hill, this place, looking right over the lake & the air is wonderful. The rains seem to have stopped at last @ there is a clear, crisp feeling about everything & the sunshine is soft & creamy. You are going to be here at the loveliest time of the year.

Darling your letter was written in reply to one I had written in a dejected mood. I don't really doubt your love, you know that, but I can't find anything about myself that could possibly be lovable & when I'm depressed I want to be reassured over & over again, that you can find something. It is so wonderful to me to feel wanted that I'm in a continual dread it may all suddenly come to an end. You must bear with me darling, & realise that I'm not quite accustomed to being really happy & wonder sometimes if it's all a dream. Specially as I have been such a rotten wife to you up to now & deserve anything I get! If feel you understand me, though and my silly moods. What we feel goes so much much deeper.

I'm reading a terribly depressing book called "Hatter's Castle" – by [A.J.] Cronin & very good but things are going from bad to worse & the chief character is too odious for words. So far one daughter has had an illegitimate baby in a cow-shed, the son has turned out a rotter & spent all his mothers money who has just died of cancer, & I'm wondering what awful thing will happen to the other daughter. The father is a drunken bully & the cause of it all.

The old boy next door is a little better & I think will live. I'm so glad.

This may be the last letter you get, but I'll go on wiring till I hear you're coming. Mummy leaves at the end of October so hurry darling! All love precious for ever xxx  
Totty xxx

24 September 1942 Blyth Cottage

My darling –

I'm hoping you will have left by now but I'm still writing in case not. I'm out! Isn't it marvellous? I came out this morning & am feeling distinctly shaky, but it's lovely to be home again. I have to go up for dressings every day as I've still got a little hole & the plaster they put on has made me come out in septic blisters round the wound, but I shall soon have those clear & by the time you arrive will be bouncing about all over the place.

I'm sitting on the verandah outside the drawing room, revelling in the evening sunshine with Alan. He is so utterly sweet, and very pleased to see me. He can all but crawl – he gets right onto his hands and knees and pushes violently with his legs, landing heavily on his face with his arms pinned under him! If you stand him at the side of his pen he clings on with both hands and his mouth and absolutely refuses to sit down again! He is always so cheerful which is such a relief, and amuses himself in his pram for hours on end without complaining. You will love him darling – at least I hope so – but not more than me please!

Reggie Lowe is up, & Toinou is in hospital trying to have the baby brought on. Reggie is full of beans & hoping to see you before he goes.

Darling, my tummy has swelled horribly since this operation – I shall have to do something about it when I get better. I was so lovely & thin before, it is sickening! I still don't feel I can "unbend" properly but that is probably imagination. We will be a couple o crocks, won't we! Patty's husband is up too, & perhaps you'll meet him. He terrifies me, but you can get together about fishing & shooting & will probably survive.

I had a letter from Pat Travers Smith & she's sending Alan a book & some cuff-links for his christening – so you're doing well out of it, what with those & his gold tie-pin!

Belinda's kittens are sweet but 2 of them have funny tails so I don't know if I'll get much for them.

Well my sweet – I'm expecting a wire any day now & terrible excited. Don't delay a minute.

Packets of love & kisses from us both,  
Always yours – Totty xxx

28<sup>th</sup> September 1942 Blyth Cottage

My own darling –

I was terribly upset to hear last night about your jaundice. It was beastly rotten luck and I know it's a foul disease and very depressing. You poor sweet, I wish I could be



with you to hold your hand – I feel so helpless here. I couldn't sleep for worrying last night, but asked about jaundice at the hospital to-day & they said that after the first week you would probably be allowed up & then it would only be a question of dieting. Darling you don't know how miserable I feel when I know you're ill – I almost ache myself and long above everything to be near you to comfort you. You must always remember that I'm thinking of you – that every night before I got to sleep I talk to you & imagine your arms round me – I do you know, even though it sounds silly. I know you so well that I know what your answers would be & I get very close to you. When you're feeling low, darling, remember how much a part of each other we are & feel my closeness, as I do yours – feel that you have me, or a bit of me, with you, and then you will almost feel my actual presence. At least that's what I find I & can wish myself into a trance that is like a dream & very satisfying.

I am much better & my hole has nearly closed. – I will only have to have one or two more dressings. I'm not walking much – only ambling gently round the garden & spend the rest of the day sitting in the sun doing absolutely nothing. Alan is playing in his pen beside me – he is just starting to crawl and I love to watch his antics and his purple face as he tries to pull himself up bars. He has a lovely colour and I'm not going to worry about his weight as everything else is right and he is so happy. He's got a huge sense of humour and goes off into peels of laughter at the slightest provocation. He still has hardly any hair but it will presumably grow. Speaking quite without prejudice he is the prettiest baby I've seen – I almost wish he was a girl! But of course Fiona will be just as beautiful.

Had a letter from Joan Davis to-day – her baby weighted 9 lbs 6 ozs!! She was 3 days having him & then had forceps so I haven't anything to say! They're calling him Lewis of all things – it reminds me of the coal-black barman of the Royal Hotel who is also Lewis.

I'm going to send this Air Mail to Calcutta to see if it gets you any quicker. I'll write every day till I hear you're coming. We'll go for picnics & lie in the sun & get quite better & quite forget all about this horrible time. I've had a note from the bank saying they've received Rs 800 which will see us through our leave (I hope!). thank you darling.

Get strong quickly my sweet & don't do anything else silly will you? Mummy sends love & Alan lots of wet kisses.

All my dearest love to you – for ever & longer, Iris

29 September 1942 Blyth Cottage

My sweet,

How are you I wonder – getting strong quickly I hope. Take a tonic & rest absolutely. You'll soon be fit I'm sure & then nothing can stop us being together. I'm getting stronger every minute & eating vastly so I shall be huge by the time you arrive – won't that be a change darling.

To-day I made my first excursion – to the Cinema to see "International Lady". It was very good & I didn't suffer in any way. Of course I spend a fortune on dandies these days but it can't be helped.

Alan has been a bit cross to-day, it may be teeth or colds which we've all got. I've been trying to buy him a hat but I think I'll have to resort to an enormous solar topee! He hates anything on his head and always wrenches it off. The present Ayah is awful and she drives us all crazy and is completely unreliable. I've got my eye on a good one so hope I won't have this one much longer. They're all so filthy dirty and slapdash and

if you turn your back for a minute they slip off to talk to the servants and leave the baby to look after himself. I think I'm a bit over-fussy but its so terribly easy to infect a baby fatally. I'm going to put Alan onto Cow's Milk very soon which will be a bit more trouble but much cheaper.

The Thompsons came to lunch to-day but otherwise nothing has happened. I'm reading a nice book called "Return of the Soldier" - about a man who comes back from the war with shell-shock, having forgotten the last 15 years of his life.

Darling there is nothing to tell you except I'm longing to see you & praying it won't be long. Every day I hope for a telegram to tell me you've started. I shall probably burst into tears all over you when you do arrive out of sheer relief & happiness! Hurry, hurry, hurry darling.

Suzanne leaves in a couple of days so you'll miss your elevating talks on the weather with her! Patty will be here though.

Well good-night my dearest - keep cheerful & keep fit whatever you do.

For always I love you. Totty

From Mac to Iris

No date. After 3.Sept. 1942 [at Elephant Falls]

Sweetheart,

You will have got at least I hope so the letters saying I could not get away and also asking you to come here. I hope you are getting my letters. I got your one with my mothers letter included posted on the 20th August. It arrived here on the 3rd Sept. Fourteen days. Darling you say you will be frightfully disappointed. Please don't be too much. I am feeling awful myself but look on the bright side and it will all soon work out. Remember that before you come you must let me know and you must abide by my decision as to whether it is alright to travel or not. Things have not quietened down yet. Isn't Fatty wonderful I wish I could only see his little face when he gets angry. He must have quite a lot of character by now and really begin to show moods of sorts.

Things very quiet here except that I am getting an exceptionally livery Adjutant and everybody in my way just now gets a thick ear. That's what you do to me you see sweet. I know they are praying for you to come back as they think it might improve me. Actually I am beginning to quite like Elephant Falls now. It is not half as bad as I thought. There are really some lovely walks and the scenery is really good. Soon I shall show you them all. We shall also do some riding as the horses are up here and they are really tame!

I have had Gulab working hard on clearing up all our clothes etc. I never realised we had so much stuff. If I came before you came darling I shall bring as much as possible but I cannot guarantee that I can bring Alans table etc. Anyway I shall see.

Les Davis has going to Digboi to sit for his Elementary Urdu which he must pass this time otherwise he drops his rank poor fellow. It will be rather a pity but the trouble seems that he cannot spell at all. Anyway we shall see. The C.O. has got very pally these days and taken me into his confidence and tells me all kinds of things about nothing. I cannot quite get the idea yet but probably there is a motive. I believe his wife is an absolute 'bitch' of a woman. She lead some young man up the garden path and then let him go with a bang. The lad landed up in front of the Brigadier. I hope she doesn't come here or there will be trouble in the ranks. I don't think that it is likely that she will. Anyway. We have an extraordinary fellow just posted to us. He is a Bengalee "Oh.my!" He hears other people calling me 'Mac' so he thinks that it is my proper name. I get

addressed something like this every morning. "Good morning, Capt Mac, Sir, It is a very good morning Sir; Yes? I have usually to turn away before I burst into undignified laughter. It is all done so seriously.

Well darling no excuse except that there is really nothing else to say. I love you darling heart and I wish I could tell that now.

All my love and kisses,

Always yours, Donald.

15.9.1942 Hospital

My darling,

Sweetheart you are naughty imagining things the way you do. You know you have no foundation at all for them and you just work yourself up for nothing. You know I love you and nothing ever in this world will change me. You must never doubt my love for you darling because it hurts me and I feel as if I have neglected you. Maybe that is true and I do not realise it? Love, my love, may be not very showing but it is there very profound and deep and you my sweet are the cause. Please never say that I say "I love you" just because I should because besides being against my nature, I don't usually, unless the circumstances press say or do a thing because I should. Now then naughty little thing just wait till I come up to Naini shortly and I will show you.

Life in here is very dull and monotonous and I feel like screaming on occasions. Never mind I am having my stitches out either today or tomorrow and shall be able to try my legs. I am sure I shall hardly be able to walk although I feel as if I could. You I imagine will be a little later as you were operated on after me. I haven't actually had a letter from you since your 'op' but I am expecting one today.

Darling Alan is wearing 'pants' is he? I'll bet he doesn't like them and when nobody is looking takes them off and hides them in his cot. If he was anything like me he certainly would have done so by now. Being like his Mummy, well?? Extraordinary Alan is nine months old now. How time has flown. We must give him a bumper 1<sup>st</sup> birthday. I should think that he will be especially keen on the feasting part of the proceedings.

I have forgotten all about the Bn these [days] and stopped worrying. I am afraid I used to worry unnecessarily about small things. Still that is what happens when one gets into a rut as I was steadily going into with the C.O. Anyway as I say I have forgotten about it all and just resting and looking forward to my leave and being with you.

Well my sweetheart I have nothing else to write about. I am writing every day now so you should get letters every day.

Give my love to all and my love to you, all my love darling.

Yours always, Donald

16.9.42 Hospital

My own darling,

Well darling you seem to have been through the mill good and proper. I received a form yesterday saying you were dangerously ill. I am afraid I got rather worried and sent a hasty wire which now I think is or was unnecessary because on enquiry I found that it was merely a matter of form which I sincerely hope it was. They seemed to have waited too long with you. Why? I wish I could be with you now. Anyway only a few weeks and all will be well. I am feeling perfectly fit and am waiting for the nurse to come and cut

my stitches and then I am allowed to try and regain my equilibrium. No mean task I am afraid. Still every day brings me closer to my objective.

Andy and Doug Cooksey came into to see me yesterday and feel very fed up with things generally. Everybody seems the same.

I have been reading an awful lot since I have been in hospital. More I think that[n] ever in my lie. They have quite a good library and it is full of travel books. Had a very good about Everest and one of Lawrence's books which I hadn't read before.

Well darling I am just dying for a letter written after your OP. I do want to know what is happening. I hope it has not been too hard on you sweetheart.

I love you darling and I [am] sick at heart at not being able to see you and hold you in my arms. Be brave little girl I will be with you soon.

All my love for always,

Donald

#### 24.9.42 Hospital

Darling heart,

Feeling much better now and all those nasty pains etc in my tummy have gone. If feel much stronger too. Please darling I hope I have not worried you much. It has not been really much and I shall be up I hope at the end of this week. Extraordinary luck we are having though isn't it. If it isn't one thing its another. All going well and to plans I hope to leave here on Monday week or maybe sooner. That will land me up in Naini sometime about the 10th or 11th Oct. Can you wait that long sweetheart? The Doc says I will almost certainly get a months leave and I shall need it too. I feel as weak as a chick just now anyway. What are you doing. You must be up by now and out of hospital shortly. The things I have planned we are going to do when I come. I was thinking yesterday evening with the sun setting on the hill opposite and everything was quiet and beautiful. Then a fellow next door turned on the wireless and it was one of my favourite Waltz tunes. Darling I was awfully soft but tears came to my eyes and I was so happy just thinking of you and ?Alan. Do you think that I am soft for doing that and that I should suppress such feelings. I shouldn't be worried about Fatty. If he is looking well and eating well you cannot expect much more. He has plenty of time to get fat like Mummy!! No really darling I should not worry.

Gosh the doctor has just been in and prodded my stomach all over the place asking if it was sore. Naturally is sore if one is prodded in the stomach like that. Anyway he said 'good' as he went so he must have been satisfied. The doctor that has been attending me had very bad luck yesterday. He was cycling to hospital and was passing a man with a long pole on his shoulder. The man swung round at the wrong moment and caught Doc Russel in the stomach. He had to have an operation but I believe he has more or less recovered and he will be alright. Bad luck though.

Well darling I shall be able to write very day again and I shall do until I am with you. Goodbye my love. Love to your Mother,

Love all my love always Donald

Kiss Fatty for me.

#### 27. 9. 42 Hospital

My darling heart,

Still in bed I am afraid although I am feeling all right. Very weak and have gone so thin. You have no idea darling. You will probably laugh at your skinny husband. I have

made up my mind to ask the doctor how much all this is gong on for as I feel they are using me as a sort of an experiment. Still I have high hopes and am really alright. You will be up by now I suppose. You are NOT to worry about me and send wires etc darling I shall be starting my journey to you by the time you get this missle. I am afraid I am not in love with the hospital or any body in it except the Head Nurse who really is good to me. The rest just scam round the place and try and make it as unbearable as possible. My room seems to be situated opposite the Kitchen which is worse than any ships kitchen in a storm.

I must say the lads have been very good about coming in. They usually come in every Wednesday and Saturday and cheer me up. We have a bunch of new officers now which I haven't met yet but whom I understand to be quite nice lads. All very young.

I cannot understand darling Andys letter only taking 4 days and you not receiving any of mine yet. I wrote to you four days after the 'ops' until I developed jaundice and then I am afraid I did not write for a long while which darling I hope you will understand.

I have just had Gulab air all our things which I think they badly needed. I hope none of the stuff was mil dewed or moth eaten (how does one spell these things)

Well darling you must excuse me until tomorrow as I am a bit tired. Goodbye my love. I love you I love you, Yours always & always Donald Kiss Fatty for me.

28.9.42 Hospital

My darling,

No really vast change from yesterday. I feel about the same. I don[t know but I believe it is a very gradual recovery one makes. I feel weak naturally and am dying to get out of bed. I kept quite well last night after demanding a sleeping draught.

Andy came in yesterday and was very pleased at getting your letter. He is always coming in these days which is extremely good. Was cut short by doctors arrival to tell me I had to undergo another op. This I may add I am writing four days after the op. It was successful and I needed it. I have a tube in me darling and they are draining stuff out of me. They say it won't take long but darling I afraid that I shall not manage to get out of hospital before the 15 Oct 42. I know you are going to suggest that you come here but sweetheart I must get away for a rest more than any thing. I am completely tired out and my nerves are very jumpy. What we are going I don't know because your Mother will be shutting shop at the end of the month as you say. Can we not make some arrangement in Naini. Take a house for a month or something. I am afraid I shall have to leave suggestions to you but do anything you would really like to do too because I want you to have a good time as well.

I have had quite a few letters from you and one just before they took me up to the operating room which was so cheering.

Well darling I shall write again tomorrow.

Please, please, don't worry.

With all my love, Yours always and always xxxx Donald xxxx

## 18 ELEPHANT FALLS AND AGRA: OCTOBER- DECEMBER 1942

My mother's account in *Daughters* is as follows:

I went back to my mother in Naini Tal, thinking it would be a short stay, but after I left, Shillong became a closed area to all but military personnel. However, when Mac became dangerously ill after two operations - we had both got appendicitis on the same day at opposite ends of India but I recovered more quickly - I made the journey back to see him without being challenged. This time I left Alan and the cat behind, and though only recently out of hospital, there were no crowds and there were men with trays and I was comfortable and segregated in the way I expected. I was worried sick though, as during those four days I had no idea what was happening to Mac. The telegram that had reached me simply said that he had been put on the danger list after his operation.

He was alive when I reached the Mission Hospital, but unrecognisable, gaunt like an old man. In the relief at seeing me, the abscess that was still keeping him feverish burst, and he started to heal. All round him, wall to wall in the rooms and all down the corridors, were sick and wounded from the Burma campaign. His appendix couldn't have chosen a worse moment to erupt, to turn septic, and then lead to jaundice. The two mission doctors were working round the clock; one of them had himself recently walked out of Burma, but they were always calm and cheerful. Later, one of them was to deliver my second daughter.

I had to find somewhere to live near the hospital, and was told of an American lady, a Mrs Nicholls Roy, who let rooms. When I went to see her I discovered that her husband was a Khasi, and called himself Reverend, since they had founded between them a fundamental type church: The One True Only Church of God. As far as I could judge they were the Two True Only Members, along with their hump-backed servant girl and their three sons. The Reverend and his sons ran a soft drinks business, but its profits, if any, didn't come into the house. Mrs Nicholls Roy and I lived on pigeons' legs perched on a few grains of rice, which I supplemented with corn cobs bought off the Khasi stalls.

Mrs Nicholls Roy lived in a fantasy world, driven there by her husband's neglect. He only made rare visits to the house, so was replaced in her affection and thoughts by her Daddy-God. In the evening she took off her red wig and let down her thin, greying hair and sang me the hymns that Daddy had dictated to her during the day. "Beautiful, beautiful are the children of the true church, beautiful beautiful are their lips, their hands, their eyes, their feet," she wailed softly in the light of the flickering paraffin lamp. I listened drowsily and explored my teeth for fragments of pigeon. Meals were not only scant, but often interrupted by sudden messages from on high, which would make Mrs Nicholls Roy leap to her feet and speak in tongues. These coded dialogues with God surprised me at first, but soon became part of high tea.

When the Reverend did appear, we were both silent in his presence, she because she was frightened of him, I because I didn't know how to deal with his soft, insulting banter. "Such an honour," he would drawl, "to have an English lady at our table. You English are fighters for our freedom isn't it?" How lucky Indians were, he mused, to be fighting their masters wars, driving their railway trains, running their sewage farms. He himself had an uncle who had been sent home to England and shown forty seven sewage farms, fortunate man.

Now I can sympathise with his feelings, and the probable insults his half-caste sons had had to endure, but at the time I found him unpleasant, and harboured suspicions that he might be a spy. During our lamplit gossips his wife often warned me about the lusts of



married men, and how wives should always keep the key of the bedroom strapped to their bodies. The Reverend never shot a remotely lustful look in either of our directions.

My days were peacefully routine: a morning walk across a meadow to the hospital; an afternoon sleep to the thud of rain on the tin roof; another evening saunter to see Mac, the moistened air filled with the smell of burnt corn. Mac improved rapidly; and I didn't mention a slight problem of my own, the fact that my wound had opened and was oozing pus. I covered it with cotton wool, and only occasionally felt real discomfort. One afternoon I woke from my sleep to a great sense of peace all over, no itching or aching from my side. I looked down to see an inch of pink rubber tube protruding from my scar, part of the tube that had drained me and had been overlooked. After its removal I had no more trouble. I don't suppose it was the first piece of software to go missing in a British Military Hospital.

A few days before we left, Mac was able to walk very slowly across the field to the house and visit my room. We lay together on the bed, too weak to make love, but close in a way that had to last a long time. The war was out there, but here on Mrs Nicholls Roy's lumpy mattress we hoped so terribly for the best. We had no money, no home, an uncertain future, a very short shared past; but happiness was the circle of arms and the rain on the roof; if Alan had been with us, we would have hoped to stay like that forever.

In fact I only saw Mac once a year for the rest of the war; a couple of sweet, unreal weeks when we talked of "after the war" as of an almost impossible dream. We would go home and live in the country on some unspecified income. Mac had an uncle whose death he thought was going to release large sums of money, so "when Uncle Robert dies" became the first verse of our own, new ballad. We knew we would never subject our children to the separations we had suffered. Mac had spent his holidays as a boy with relations in Edinburgh in whose icy house Everyone quarrelled and lectured and saved string.

## DIARIES ETC

Violet's diary shows when Iris left for Shillong, and notes carefully my weight as I grew under my grandmother's careful regime.

3<sup>rd</sup> October Iris went to Shillong

10<sup>th</sup> October 16lb 3 and a half oz

17<sup>th</sup> October 16 lb 10 and a half oz

24 October 17lb 5 half oz

7<sup>th</sup> November 17 lb 11 and a half oz.

## LETTERS

### OCTOBER

8<sup>th</sup> October 1942 from Iris at Mountain View, Shillong c/o Mrs Nichols-Roy to Violet at Blyth Cottage, Naini Tal

PS. Hope Robert is better

Darling Mummy,

Well here I am, with a roof over my head and a bed to sleep on and its all quite surprising! I arrived here yesterday at 4 p.m. and went straight to the hospital to see Mac. The matron of the hospital told me of this place which is ten minutes walk away. So I'm very lucky and comfortable and please don't worry about me.

I was shocked to the core at Mac's condition – I've never seen anyone so changed and it made me feel quite faint to think how ill he must have been to have reached such a condition. His eyes are sunk into his head and his cheeks just aren't – nothing but skin stretched over bone and his arms and legs so thin and white. It is pathetic and I could hardly bear to look at him at first. However there is nothing to do but slowly build him up and be thankful he has got through at all. He was normal for the first time yesterday so lets hope my arrival has started the good work! Poor darling, he is terribly depressed and I'm very thankful I came because just now he needs encouragement more than anything. He has a tube of course and is getting bowel washes in case there is another small abscess they did not find. I must say I was a little surprised at the hospital, but Mac tells me they are rushed of their feet and anyway I suppose one can't expect everywhere to be as good as the Ramsey. He's in a room smaller than mine with 2 other beds in it and everything a little vague and carefree. He tells me he has never been on a diet for his jaundice and orders his own meals! But there is no doubt that the Dr is good and that after all is the main thing. I went in search of Minadex this afternoon but could only find Malt and Cod Liver Oil. However I think I have half my old Metatone bottle at Elephant Falls.

I feel rather guilty rushing off so suddenly and leaving you to cope with Alan alone – I do hope you can manage and can get a decent Ayah. Let me know your plans for Agra so I can make ours to suit. I can never thank you enough, Mummy, for being such a haven to me – I don't know what I should have done otherwise. Perhaps we'll be able to do the same for you one day! I really am terribly grateful.

Am very tired so I'll write again in the morning to tell you about the journey etc.

All love to you and my Alan. Iris

## DECEMBER

### Mac to Iris

31 December 1942 Shillong

My darling,

No letter from you for a whole week. I only hope that mine are getting thro'. Evidently another block in Calcutta. I am looking forward to getting thousands of letters one of these days or will it be like last time, a nice excuse for not writing??

I have had an early bath and am missing dinner and soaking myself with medicine in one final effort to get rid of this blasted cold. Thank goodness I have got rid of the pains in my chest but have acquired an aching cough.

You will notice it's the 31st and tomorrow is the Scots big show. Well I have missed it. Andy and I were celebrating with dinner at Pinewoods but I am afraid that he had to go off alone. Still I should just feel miserable if I had gone.

Please let me know your plans for the next month or so.

I may go and see Bosun. He is somewhere near Bombay you know. Keep your fingers crossed.

Write and tell me how all is getting along. I suppose that he [Alan] will start walking soon. I hope we shall be together then. Does he still swear at his Daddy. I don't

suppose he will remember me at all. I was just beginning to get to know him, at least, he was one.

Well darling you must excuse the short note but am very busy!!?! (really)

All my love sweet, Yrs Donald

Kiss my Fatty.

## Diaries

Will:

25.12.42 Whole family present at Cecil Hotel

Mac leaves for Shillong Dec

Richard and Billy also at Agra for Xmas

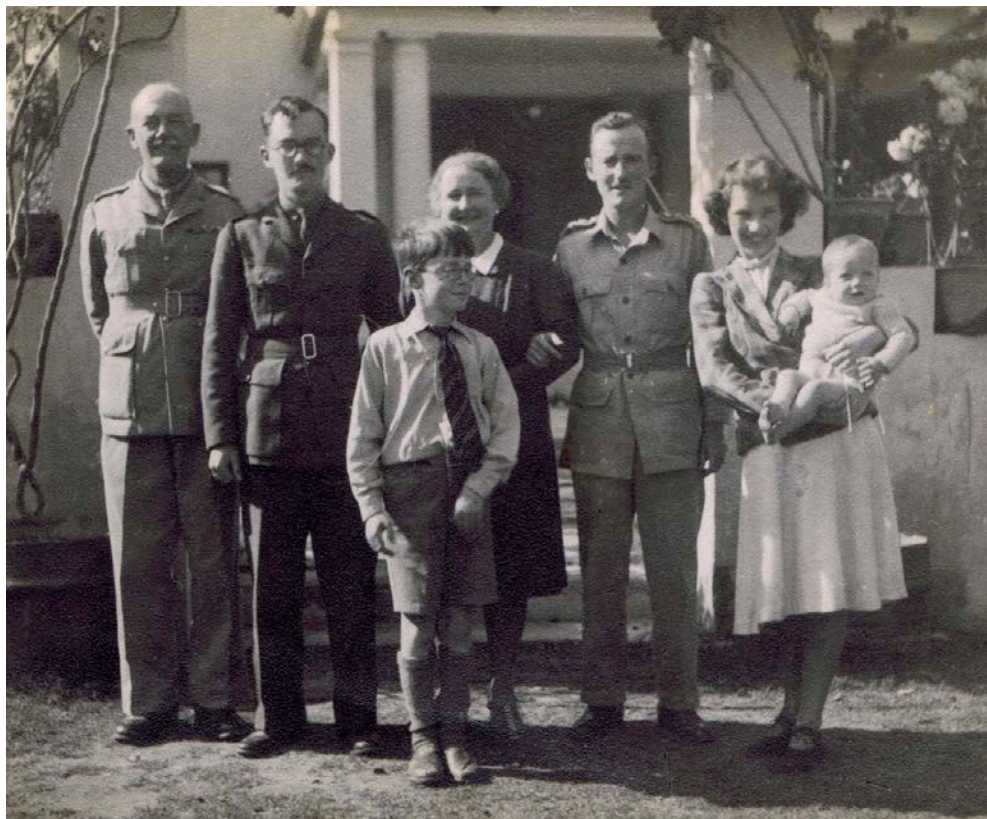
27<sup>th</sup> Decr hear Paterson is to give up Director in Feby 43 and that Grant is to be Director.

War situation improves from November till close of year

Russians doing grandly.

30 Dec. Roy comes Agra 2-3 days

## Christmas 1941 – Alan aged one



## 19 SHILLONG: JANUARY TO APRIL 1943

### DIARIES

**Violet's diaries** for the early part of 1943

- 1.1 Leave Agra with Robert and Roy 4.41 - arrive 9.30 bathe and change and go to dance till 12
  - 2.1 Go by tonga to Optan Co and on to Connaught place wander round shopping
  - 3.1 Return to Agra
  - 7.1 [A prayer copied out: 'Teach us, Good Lord, to serve the as thou deserves, to give & not count the cost, to fight & not to heed the wounds; to toil & not to seek for rest; to labour & not to ask for any reward; save that of knowing that we do thy will.']
  - 10.1 Iris went to Travers Smith and Alan comes to me. Will went on tour too
  - 16.1 On way to Thrift Shop were badly bitten in thigh by dog - 3 stitches
  - 17.1 Iris returned and slept in my room
  - 19.1 Will saw the dog's [owner] they say I threw stones
  - 2.2 re boiled some marmalade
  - 3.2 26 lbs marmalade
  - 27.2 McGregor mated to Vanda. Went to Police Sports & on return drank in barn with U.S.A. Sullys & Wing Com: Jenkins dinner & went to How Green was my Valley [X - ie. period, 'very scanty']
  - 28.2 McGregor mated again. Went to Iris & then to Mess for beer - Robert went out to Air Field. Slept. Iris and Alan came over
  - 7.3 Will returned from tour. Bad Tummy.
  - 8.3 Took R[obert] to eye specialists
  - 3.4 T.A.B. Injection R & I
- Will's diaries for first four months of 1943

**1943** [front: Lt Col W.R.James, Cecil Hotel, Agra]

- Whole family at Agra for Xmas 42
- Rumour that Grant taking over Director in Feby
- 1.1 Violet Robert and Roy go to Delhi. Mrs Sullivan & family arrive.
  - 2.1 Rain last night. O.B.E. for Grant - wrote to him. Russians take Velikiluke
  - Pam Rodgers engaged Malik Khizar Hayt Khan appointed Premier of Punjab
  - 3.1 Iris goes to Hyde Frosts, Violet and Robert return from Delhi
  - Went to Canadian Ai Force film (Cagney) with Robert ("Captain of the Clouds")
  - 4.1. Sully goes to Nazirabad. Clerk Kishan Chand arrives. See film "Next of Kin" by order of G.O.C. Richard to be att[ache]d to Area Hqrs.
  - 5.1 Rain. Drink party at Likemans
  - 7.1 Drinks with Garets 1 bot whisky from Canteen
  - 8.1 Sully returns from Tour. V at Club working party. Asked to dinner at GOC's but cannot go owing to tour.
  - 9.1 Sent back R[obert]'s glasses to Mod Opt Co - V helps at Thrift Shop. Letter from Grant saying he knows nothing about Director.
- Memo: send money home? Write Adelaide. Acacia Auriculiformis for Mall Bigonia Venustra. Commuting Pension

10. Left Agra with Iris arrived Mutha Photos from Richard arrived - of family group

11.1 Inspected Muttra

12.1 Richards birthday. Aged 22. Left Muttra 6 am arrived Delhi Cantt. Putting up with Mahony at B No.5

13.1 Ogilvy staying with Mahony. Rainy & bleak day. Asked Mahony to suspect 2 CF servants.

14.1 Saw Muirhead. Arrived Meerut 4.30 pm Royal Hotel. Bought Cambridge History [memorandum: The Concise Cambridge History of Eng Lit G. Samper] of Literature at Java. Oxford Book still 16/2/-

15.1 Went round Meerut and in afternoon Cantt garden

16.1 Met Mrs Alexander. Completed inspection of Meerut. Met Adjutant of 3 GR Training Bn Dehara Dun

Memo: The Nabobs T.G.P. Spear, A Pageant of Asia, Saunders

17.1 Sgt Pring of Berkhamsted brings down 3 Jap bombers in 4 min over Calcutta. [see long article on web] Saw Brig Fraser. Tea E.O. Drinks Mrs Alexander & 2 other women.

18.1 Left Meerut 6 am arrived Agra. Found Violet has been bitten by Juwala Barak(?) dog and that Mac has had operation for hernia

19.1 Looked at dog that bit V. It must be kept on a chain lead. Seige of Leningrad raised by Russians. 27.1 Churchill and Roosevelt etc meet at Casablanca

20.1 Gen Silson? goes on tour. Goering issued an order to Luftwaffe in N. Africa that they are not doing well & that their confreres in Russia will be ashamed of them. Played footer with children

21.1 Russians capture Voroshilovski?. Dine with Hollands & Mrs Harris.

22.1 Drinks with Ashtons & Robertson. See Rachpal S?? Bal cr at Lloyds on 15.10.41 was £124-18-2 Mac back on duty in Shillong.

22.1 Saw Shula Suptd ?Faj. Gardens - Millettie.

8th army nearing Tripoli. Tripoli taken. V. gets grapefruit from Mitchell of Mildura Farm. Renata Herd Montgomery?

Memo: Jeffreys present. Wrote to him on 23rd. Owenia Cerasfera (Queensland Cherry)

24.1 Drinks with Scotts. Fennel (?Prusetuo?) from Mrs Hyde Frost. Violet gets Tara Hall Naini for Pearts.

25.1 Robert wakes with inflamed eye & does not go to school. Smallpox at Mhow. Violet engaged in making marmalade.

26. 1 Paterson writes to Ashton that Grant is taking over Director from him next month. Rain Wrote to National Bank Lahore securities.

27.1 Church ill and Roosevelt etc meet at Casablanca . Liquid manure on Malt strips. Went to Ledgerwoods rooms.

28.1 Iris came to lunch. Purchased 15 bots rum. Hollands, Clack, Mrs Harris & Legerwoods to dinner. Ashton asks me to share his quartrs during hot weather.

29. Englefield applies for ??? job. Wrote yesterday to CMA Pensions Lahore. Mrs Vincent wants rooms Naini.

30.1 Saw Trainer re. Dina. Nathihouse. Biked to Taj before tea. Pres Roosfelt 6 today Memorandum: Send money home. Write re Naini Telephone. Lettington does not want Naini Cottage

31.1 Army Commadr arrived from Tour. Momanski & Russians capture Tichoretsi. Our mosquito planes interrupt Goerings speech. Brig Inskip at Agra.

1.2. Ashton goes on tour. Dewar & Ledgerwood to dinner & bridge.  
 2.2 Saw Army Commander. McWhiney asks me if I could do Club Secr. Germans all mopped up at Stalingrad 90,000 prisoners  
 3.2. Took Robert to the shops. Wrote to Roy.  
 4.2. Kupiansk captured by the Russians – Railway line between Kursk & Orel cut. Mrs. Vincent comes to discuss P.G.ing in Naini.  
 5.2. Walk with V. Mrs Vowsley appointed to Club catering (Voles?)  
 6.2. Chose wedding present for Mrs Malden  
 Memo: Send money home  
 7.2 Drinks with Sullivans & Thompson. Iris comes to lunch. Iris returns from tour. Saw film Sullivans Travels.  
 8.2 Two books from library. Sully came to hotel. Violet buys two carpets from Jail. Wrote Club about quarter.  
 9.2 Russians take Kursk. Violet takes Robert to see film Bonnie Scotland. Violet not feeling fit.  
 10.2 Violet better. Walked to Hospital to meet Violet. Sulphate of ammonia on our mall grass.  
 11.2 Graveston goes to S Army. Jeffreys goes to E Army. Sulphate of ammonia on mall grass.  
 12.2 Drinks Waughs 71 Ochterony Rd. Violet below par. Too much marmilade making. Russians take Vilgorod.  
 13.2 Inspected Rachpol Spr. Wrote to Pateron. Russians take Voroshilosk. Began new bottle rum. Lovely weather. Memo: Vist Wanglis Carpet factory. Send money home.  
 14.2 Windy day. Took Robert to church. Walk with Violet to Taj gardens. Iris has poem in “Onlooker”  
 15.2 Dowland tells Ashton that I am not to say on as DD after August. Gen Noyes arrives. Russians take Rostov  
 16.2 Drinks with Hyde Frosts KHARKOV captured by the Russians.  
 17.2 Drinks with Asthon. Send Yogi book to Mrs Alfieri.  
 18.2 Violet goes to Delhi dog show with Ledwards. Robert and Iris go to film Belle Star  
 19.2 Wrote to Paterson re. Col & Lt Col for Sully and self  
 20.2 Robert very disobedient and would not go to Iris. Gandhi’s condition very grave during his fast. Looked at Bungalow No 9  
 Memo. Send money home  
 21.2 took Robert to swimming bath. Jutleys there. Met Roy at Station. Biked to Taj.  
 22.2 Gave Iris revised trains for Meerut. Robert stays in bed.  
 23.2 Violet returns to Agra with Mr McGregor [dog]  
 24.2 Went for walk with Violet. Saw Ellison in office.  
 25.2 Went to film Little Jones  
 26.2 Saw Thurling Blackwell re Ice Factory case  
 27.2 Wrote to EO Wellington re birth certificate. Offal manure put on mall  
 Memo. Haversack from Ordnance. Bush shirts. Commuting pension.  
 28.2. Went to drinks at xix Hyderabad Mess. Red X week starts tomorrow. Robert taken to Air Field.



1.3 Left Agra – Slept night in Cawnpore Stn as connection to Lucknow missed at Cawnpore.

2.3 Arrd ?Fazeban 9-30 pm. Saw Abdullah Khan & Col Prinsize at Lucknow also Nehru.

3.3. Pearsons have drink party. RZHEV captured by Russians.

4.3 Saw D.C. with Pearson. Left Fyzabad 11.20. Arrd Benares 4.30 pm. Met by Kareshwar Nattu.

5.3 Inspected. Saw Col. Bromfield. Tummy upset. Reading Aldous Huxley's "Ends & Means" which is v. good.

6.3 Jap Convoy kicked out by Gen McArthur. Went to Lohta with Martin

Memo: Roberts TAB

7.3 Arrived Agra 4.30 pm. Violet goes to Baseball. Diarrhoea

8.3 Saw Dewar. Did not go to office. Robert sees eye specialist. Wrote to Richard.

9.3 Feeling better – kept to my room. Wrote to Iris.

10.3 Still confined to quarters. Lent Mrs Scott Aldous Huxley's "Ends and Means"

11.3 Went to office. Letter from Paterson. Had Hyde Frosts to film Pied Piper & dinner

12.3 Violet starts rehearsing for "Middle Watch" Russians take VIASMA

13.3 - [nothing]

14.3 Lunch at ? Alffierco. Mrs Wallace came to tea. Saw garden leading off Taj.

1.3 Dine with G.O.C. in chief. Official hot weather begins. Saw Otway ?pits

16.3 80 degrees. Germans retake Karkov. Campbell promises lorries for ??? Mall. Alan has dysentery.

17.3 82 degrees Started wearing bush shirt. Invited to go up in plane tomorrow by American Officer (Statton)

18.3 84 degrees. No plane trip after all. Took Robert to swimming bath. Iris baby not well.

19.3 86 degrees. Swim in evening. Mrs Vincent going Lahore on Sunday. Saw Dr Datta.

20.3 87 degrees. Dinner Hallowses. Iris baby better. Mac to be stationed at Elephant Falls

21.3 86 degrees. Went to swimming bath. Violet rehearsing

22.3 84 degrees

23.3 Dine with Sully at 8 pm. & see "Middle Watch". – Lt Col & Mrs Riddle were there –Violet was acting.

24.3 8th army attacking. Moreth fine. Took Robert to see "Middle Watch"

25.3 Wrote to Jack Marshall

26.3 Sully leaves for tour. Sent him "Nemesis" by Douglas Read.

27.3 Violet and Robert and Iris leave for Naini (Iris motors from Meerut to Agra)

28.3 Swimming bath. Cashtons & Linneys to lunch. Mrs Scott returns Aldous Huxley "Ends & Means".

29.3 Iris arrives from Meerut and leaves for Naini with Violet and Robert

30.3 8th army through Mareth Line. Wire from Violet.

31.3. Swimming Bath. Letter from Richard & Evelyn.

1.4 Hear from Page that 4 lorries will get tar during next 4 days. Letter from mater

2.4 Olive doing radio location & engaged to a RAMC doctor. To marry when war is over. Aunt A anxious to hear from me. Desmond on a destroyer. Joan's husband Bde Major McSwinnny a Major

3.4 Malcolm leaves

Memo: Letter to Evelyn & mater & Aunt A (69 Claremont Road Tun Wells)

4.4 Sully returns. Went to Jail for carpets. Saw Dr Deal

5.4 Tar laid on Mall. Wrote to Grant re my leave  
 6.4 Delhi Enquiry 2.30 p.m. Leave Agra 7.30 AM, Arr Delhi 11.30.  
 7.4 Buy carpets from Jail for Violet and send them to Naini with Hollands. Letter from Richard  
 8.4 Rain all afternoon. Went to Empress library. Bank Balance in England on 15-12-42 was £85-12-6  
 9.4 Bought bellows mentioned stores & also 6 prs sheets & 2 blankets for V. Sent Huntleys "Ends & Means" to Richard.  
 10.4 Roberts birthday. Letters to Eve & Aunt A.  
 Memo. 12 Tinned Peaches, 12 Tinned Bacon, 1 Tinned Cheese (large) 3 Jail carpets. Mrs Wallaces box  
 11.4 Malcolm returns  
 12.4 Sully leaves. Department Exams. Hear Barty is to give up S.S.O. Naini  
 13.4 Department Exams  
 14.4 Department Exams. Took Sadiq for a walk to GTaj area. Went to Taj with Ashok?  
 15.4 -  
 15.6.4 Malcolm took me for drive in his trap  
 17.4 Nineteen flowers out also Garuga Prun??  
 Memo: Letters to Eve, Mater & Aunt A. Money Home £150 sent  
 18.4 Walk in Taj with Malcolm  
 19.4 Drive on Shan ?Suar Rd with Malcolm. Letter from Richard. Wrote to Billy for his birthday  
 20.4 Bike & walk to aerodrome with Malcolm  
 21.4 Sully returns. Hatz? promises me room 41  
 22.4 Letter from Grant about my leave. Go up to Naini  
 23.4 Travel with Paddy Minogue  
 24.4 Col & Mrs Vincent arrives Naini  
 25.4 Billys birthday. Saw Topsy Baily. Col Vincent leaves for Lahore  
 26.4 Leave Naini arr Bareilly  
 27.4 Inspect Bareilly  
 28.4 Inspect Bareilly. Met Brig Westmacott. Leave Bareilly for Naini  
 29.4 Arr Agra. Go into room 41.  
 30.4 Put in for leave from 28 July to 27 August.

## BABIES BOOK

He [Alan] first stood alone on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1943, aged 13 and a half months. Rose to his feet alone on February 23<sup>rd</sup>.

## LETTERS

4 January 1942 Shillong    Mac to Iris

Darling heart,

Just running round in circles am so busy. I was up most of last night and am feeling very tired but rather happy. See if you can guess. Cant say any more.

I hope you are getting my letters by now. Calcutta held up one of yours for ten days so you must be patient. I am so glad Alan had such a nice party darling. I do wish that I

had been there to see it all. Next time he will have a wonderful party and Christmas and so shall we darling. Really enjoy it and all have stockings and presents. Darling what fun.

I am so sorry I was not able to send presents to you all but hope that you did it for me. I always feel so ashamed about presents. I always get such nice ones darling and never repay them. As I always say and which you must have [rest lost]

6.1.43 Shillong

My darling,

Just got a letter of yours. They are taking ages to get through aren't they. It was the letter in which you had the episode with the American. Furious of course I am furious but what is the use. I can't do much when I am miles and miles away. That is up to you although I sincerely hope darling that you do not do it too often. No sweetheart telling me that made me feel all queer and really I felt that the world had come to an end and that you didn't love me and that I haven't given you enough happiness. There are people who could give you more I know darling but [am] I trying hard to get more & more for you. But you do love me don't you? What did this bloody American do. I hope he didn't kiss you, although I suppose he must. It makes me sick, I am sorry darling but the very idea of you in any body else's arms just would kill me.

I am afraid that I am not feeling to well just now and the doctor says I have overdone things. I hope it is not true. I am going down for another examination today. I hope it does not mean any more hospital etc. I don't think so. I shall just have to take things easy.

The C.O. is supposed to come back today although I have my doubts as the trains are running late still.

Darling I can't get this bloody American off my head. I am awful I know. Please promise me you won't do it again. I have no right to ask you to promise me but darling I am a funny person and I love you so desperately that if I thought you were getting keen on one of those Americans that I should ---- Anyway darling you must tell me always about these things as I will and we both have been doing.

I only wish to God that we were together. Life is absolutely hell up here and I am moody and in a continual temper. I am getting worse and I am not feeling the way I should. I need you terribly and being apart is tearing my insides apart.

Well my little girl please excuse this letter. Keep your little chin up. I wish I could kiss you now. Love to Alan and all the love in the world to you Iris.

Yours ever & ever, Donald

9 January 1943 Shillong

My darling,

I received your letter dated the 23rd Dec yesterday. I really don't know what happens to mail. It is horrible. I think I shall send a wire to you on principal every week. Anyway it will bring us a bit closer together. I am afraid I wrote such a horrible letter last time. I am sorry darling but it is the way I am made.

I am frightfully busy these days but not feeling too well I don't suppose it is much to worry about but I hate being continually on the verge of being alright and all wrong.

The C.O. has come back minus wife much to his disgust. He is just the same old dodderer. Makes me wild all the time. I really am beginning to hate him as everybody does in the Bn. I think, except our 'Les' who loves him. Birds of a feather I think really. 'Les' of course now that he has been let off taking the Urdu exam is a marvellous man.

I thought Alan would have cut his teeth by now. I am expecting to see with teeth and talking which won't be long now. By the way you haven't told me the details of your new abode. Are you leaving the Hotel or what? Darling please look after yourself and don't stint yourself in anyway. You can have all the money you want so please have good food etc. It is not worth it out in this beastly country.

Thanks very much for sending the wire to my mother. It will please her no end. I am afraid I was popping in and out of bed most of Christmas and New Year. So missed things and you tremendously. I did not kiss anybody under any tree at New Year. I was kissing you in my dreams darling and am missing you. All my love to yourself and Alan,

Yrs always & always, Donald

Undated - January 1943 Welsh Mission Hosp, Shillong

My darling,

I sent you a wire yesterday cause mail does not seem to be getting through and I thought it just as well to let you know that I am still alive and kicking. Really I am as fit as a fiddle and feel better now than I have ever felt. Evidently at the same time as they did the hernia operation they took out a little ??? [smudged] from the previous operation that had been left behind and also one or two more stitches. Dr Hughes is quite mystified about it all but guaranteed that I should have no more trouble in that direction. I shall be having my stitches out in a day or two and hope to be back on the job in 10 or 14 days time. Sweetheart I hope all this has not worried you too much and I thought I would not tell you before about it as it would only have worried you more. Now that it is all successfully finished there is nothing left but for me to tell you about my 3rd 'op' which I shall be doing soon.

I have been reading quite a lot just lately. Reading all about shooting etc. That book which I got in Calcutta has been grand and I have been picking arguments just to show off my superior knowledge about birds & beasts. Rather fun.

I hope sweetie that you are having a good time and that you went to Delhi. I shall be sending more money soon. Let me know if you want any immediately as I am paying off Chowdry in large lumps so there won't be much left. Who cares? I don't, as long as I have you and Alan.

The news these days is pretty good isn't it. Russia doing pretty big stuff. I don't think that the end can be very far distant now and we shall go home even if we have to pinch a rowing boat.

Oh by the way I hope 'Pinkie' was nice to you and didn't hold your hand too long. These young blokes you got to watch. Up to all kind of tricks.

I have the wireless on just now and Bing Crosby has just sung a song. He's good darling, quite good.

Well sweetheart I must go to sleep as I am feeling tired. I am going to sleep thinking of you as I always do. Kiss me my darling.

Donald.

18.1.1943 Welsh Mission

My sweet,

Just received three letters from you in one day one dated the 26th Dec! Here I have been blaming you for not writing although I know perfectly well you had. Another letter was written while you were on the train to Delhi. Darling I deserved it all. I am terrible.

I know you love me Iris and it hurt to hear you say that anything could ever poison our relationship. It was all my fault and my not feeling well. I realized after I had written that letter how 'caddish' and low I had been. Nothing Iris will ever come between us. I love you so much. Please please forgive me. If I could only see you now I could cry quite openly on your shoulder darling. I am writing this letter very late but am just feeling so lonely and in love that I could go on for weeks. You must get incredibly lonely and my little sweet must not cry. Oh darling darling how I long for you. In one of your letters, quite by accident I am sure you left a strand or two of your hair. I have them now and am kissing them imagining that it is you and you are close to me. I am nearly asleep and will finish this tomorrow. Goodnight sweet my love. I have sent you a kiss. Bless you.

Next morning. The doctor has just been in and said that my stitches can come out so I shall be up by the end of the week with any luck. I am feeling really wonderfully fit and have no qualms at all. The doctor says I must take things easily for a while after. Something like three months. I think that I can manage that alright.

Lady Linlithgow was round the hospital yesterday. There was quite a flap on, everybody running round in small circles. She didn't go into every ward however and I did not see her although she naturally asked about me! She must be getting fed up at the sight of me in Delhi???

Legon left hospital yesterday. He was a bit sorry about it all. He has been here for six months now and the place was like a home to him. All the little nurses wept profusely.

Well sweetheart take care of yourself. I hope to see you about the middle of next month. Keep your fingers crossed. I cannot say more and I cannot promise anything else.

Again, I hope you had a good time in Delhi.

All my love to you and Alan,

Yrs always, Donald

22 January 1943 Welsh Mission

My darling,

I have just written or at least sent you a letter today but somehow, I want to talk to you and as I cannot, do you mind if I just blether to you in this letter and write anything that comes into my mind. Have had a crack at today's crossword and have not been very successful despite the purchase of a book called "Everybody's complete Encyclopedia." Actually I have given up the Crossword and broadening my mind reading this book. Quite good fun. Fellow next door has just had an operation and is groaning away. I hope I did not sound quite as bad as that. Yes there is the other fellow just come down from the operating theatre after two hours. Couldn't find out what was wrong with him. He is also letting out horrible groans. This place sounds almost like a hospital really. I hope it does not go on all night. They are in the next room to me.

Darling heart I hope you don't mind all this drivel but I rather like just jotting down what I am thinking and what is going on in the vicinity. You don't mind do you. It is just about tea time now. I wish you were here to have a cup 'a' tea with me like you used to. Legon left me a huge tin of golden syrup which I gorge myself on. ---- Better make up our minds where and on what (very important) we are going home.

The war seems to have taken at last a definite turn for the better and with any luck should be over by the end of this year. I hope so. I really honestly don't see what I am going to do. Two courses are open, stay in the army or go back to tea until something else turns up. What do you honestly think darling. I think we might as well sort of have

an[d] idea of what we will be doing, some plan or other. I must have something to keep you and Alan. Lets go to the South Sea Islands and make our own home and wear grass skirts and swim all day.

I must stop all this drivel darling. I shall write some sense tomorrow. No news yet but hope soon. I love you sweet more and more and hope that we shall be together very soon. Always yours, Donald

22.1. 1943 [same date] Welsh Mission

Darling,

A wire and two letters in one day to thank you for. I am so glad that you went to Delhi. It probably did you the world of good. It must be very tiring indeed looking after Alan all the time and he must be getting quite a handful nowadays. I wish I could have been with you in Delhi. I would have loved going round the shops, really I would darling. I hope you got first what you wanted. I hope to get your clothes which are here to you soon.

I am feeling on top of the world still. My stitches are out and everything has gone according to the book this time. No complications. I shall be in here another week or so as the doctor wants me to give this wound a complete rest. I agree and as there is nothing much doing with the Bn it will do me good. The food is twenty times better than our mess. I do nothing but eat sleep and eat much to the disgust of the nurses whom I am sure have a nickname for me which hints at eating large quantities. I am afraid that I am putting on weight at a disgusting rate. Talk about 'Fatty Boy'.

How did you find Alan when you got back. I suppose he is looking wonderful with his teeth. Has he said anything yet. It is about time he said a word or two isn't it?

The C.O. has been ill in bed ever since he came back and I have not seen him for ages. Not that it worries me much mind you. Andy has left the hospital and another fellow called Elwell whom you did not meet has taken his place. The Assam Regt always has a[t] least two people in the hospital. I can't see how they can avoid it with all those officers.

Since I have been in hospital I have got very keen on 'Crosswords' and yesterday I did all but four words which was pretty good for me. Its funny how one gets into the way of doing them. You could do them in about ten minutes, I know, but it is good for me isn't it darling.

With any luck darling you will not have to go to Naini this year. Can't tell you why just you pray and keep those fingers crossed.

Well darling heart I must go to sleep as my head is buzzing with words ending in 'ing' etc.

I love you my sweet. Take care of yourself and Alan. Bless you both.

Xxx Always yours xxxx Donald

Sorry for such a sketchy letter but there is really no news.

25.1.43 Welsh Mission

My own darling,

Well two weeks ago today since I had my operation and I feel on top of the world. I have every hope of being out of hospital at the end of this week. That is Dr Hughes's opinion so I have as I say every hope. Please don't worry darling because as I say I am absolutely a new man now.



Hospital is rather boring just now although I have the Crossword and plenty to read. I have just read a marvellous book called Athenian Memories by Compton Mackenzie. Absolutely terrific. I wish darling, if you can manage it, get me any other books of his under the following titles, Greek Memories or Athenian Memories Books 1 & 3 (it was the 2 book I read). I don't think I have liked a book so much since I read Lawrences works.

Yes darling I am so sorry the way I upset you with my letters. I deserve to be spanked. On[e] thing I don't deserve is to have you the way I treat you darling. I am awful really but you must put up with me please sweet and pay no attention to my silliness. Iris you know I should never do anything to hurt you intentionally and I know to that you love me. I am just a bloody fool at times. It shook me badly last time I left you more so than you know, because I realise now that my whole life just revolves round you and you again. Believe me darling girl and please forgive me.

Funny thing I discovered here the other day. One of the sisters (staff) told me. She said that last time I was here Dr Hughes was very worried about me and my condition and attributes my coming round again to your arrival. He had said that up to the time you arrived my condition had become serious and that I was running far to high temperatures for his liking. I did not realize what he was driving at when he kept asking me this time whether you were here or not. Just shows darling what an effect you have on me. When you arrived something just seemed to snap into place again. This time however it was such a minor affair that the thought of you and being able to see you soon was and has been enough.

Well after talking all about myself how is the family and my fat urchin. All the nurses here have fallen in love with him from vivid descriptions and the few photos I have of him. Priss was frightfully disappointed that you and Alan did not come back with me. Do let me know what you and Alan are doing. You know a thought has struck me and my hair is standing on end with guilt. I never wrote your Mother and thanked her for what she did for us while on leave. Please apologise and say that I am doing so and my excuse is poor, not feeling too bright and lots of work.

By the way I received your telegram asking me to wire my condition which I will do tomorrow but please darling do not worry because I am feeling grand honestly. Well darling heart I must shut up now as it is late and my companion wants to go to sleep so I shall have to put out the light.

All the love and kisses in the world darling. I wish I could have you in my arms.

Yours always, Donald

27.1.1943 Welsh Mission hospital

My darling,

Two lovely long letters from you, one with Andys letter enclosed. I have written pretty often so you should be getting pretty regular bulletins of my health. I still feel grand and I hope I shall be back, as you say, "to the grindstone" pretty soon. I am definitely going to take things easy. (Excuse my butting in but the wireless has just now announced that Bing Crosby is to sing, "If I had my way". He is, I admit darling, making quite a good job of it). No Andy has not left yet so I shall give him your chit the next time he comes in. He has been very good about coming in and seeing me. He is a good bloke. I am so glad Alan is so full of beans. I should have been very annoyed if he had not recognized his Mummy when you came back from Delhi.

I am so sorry to hear about your Mother. What dog was it that caused all the damage. I hope it isn't still flying round. Keep a good look out. I don't want either you or Alan to be caught.

Diana and Jenny are grand and Jenny has grown huge. She is still limping slightly but I think it won't be long now before she will be O.K.

Letter from the Company which I enclose. The second piece of ---- I have had from them since I left nearly three years ago. Still if we are stuck I can always have something to fall back on.

Hamilton came in this evening. He has lost sight in that eye and says there is no hope for it. He sent his regards. I feel awfully sorry for him. Still he seems very cheerful about it all.

Darling please do not worry about me. I am absolutely alright now and apart from the fact that I have to take things easily for a while I am in far better health than I have been for a long while. Touch wood. I miss you terribly and I [am] sure the tables will turn shortly. At least I am more or less certain. Well my little honeybunch you must excuse the short note but really I have no news at all. I shall try and think of adding some more to this tomorrow morning. Goodnight darling xxxx

Nothing to add my sweet. The Doc was very pleased with my progress this morning. Take care of yourself darling heart. Tons of love,  
Yours always, Donald

#### 29.1.43 Welsh Mission

My darling,

I am getting your letters quite regularly now and how I love them. You have no idea how much I love them. It is getting rather boring in hospital now and I have plenty of time to think. When I do it is inevitably about you and Alan. I think of all kinds of things. I build castles in the air; I know darling but I love doing it. I think about your next birthday and what I will get you and one thing leads to another and I find that nothing could be good enough. Crash, down comes my little castle and I say, "Well maybe I can't get all those things but what I do get doesn't really matter it's the thought behind it." Then I think about next Christmas and what we shall do. All three of us shall have stockings and we shall have a Christmas tree with countless lights and a roaring fire with Alan scooting about making happy little noises. We shall be together, we must be. Darling wouldn't it just be heavenly. Am I raving sweetheart? Our little house at home naturally has taken up a permanent place in my thoughts. I always say that I must get it without you knowing and suddenly one day I will whisk you off and land you at the front gate. A funny little gate that always swings shut and squeaks slightly, yes darling I go into the minutest detail and go on and on brick upon brick and I really imagine at times that we are there. Do you think darling we shall ever have all these things? I hope to God that we do.

Its raining outside and I feel nice and cozy but missing you terribly. However it won't be long now. Is it warming up in Agra now. I suppose it will be. I don't suppose you know anybody down in the Nilgiris do you?

I am still as fit as a fiddle and the doctor said I can get up so I shall be back to work in a few days. I am going to take it easy this time. No darling I have had no nice girls which I would like to hold hands with though mind you one or two have been to see me. Dora for one. She sent me some lovely flowers from Government house. Very good of her. General Rankin came in and had a chat; jolly little fellow and was quite sorry to hear about my mishaps.

Well my darling little girl I must finish off this. I am sorry that is so short but there is really no news. I found out by the way that Iris means Rainbow in some language, Greek, I think. So my little Rainbow goodnight and kiss my little weeny Rainbow for me xxxx

Always Always yours,  
Donald

## 2.2.43 Welsh Mission

My darling,

Just received another letter from you and darling before we go any further you must get a decent ayah or nurse for Alan. You are just tiring yourself out. Put an adv. In the paper and get a good ayah please. What does it matter what you pay her. I don't mind and I think that we can afford it. I know you sweetheart you will just say "Oh but I would rather look after Alan myself." Please darling promise me that you will get an ayah. I was very sorry to hear that Alan had tummy upset and hope it is nothing bad. I am glad that you are finding time for your book. You have no idea how I am looking forward to it Iris. Not because of the money but because I would like to see [you]fulfil an ambition which I am convinced you are capable of.

Well I am up now and feeling grand. I have been up and walking (gently) about the place and hope to get back to work at the end of this week. I must say that I was surprised how strong I felt this time when I got up. I am not overdoing it though.

The C.O. is now in the hospital. Run down generally. I had a long talk with him this evening about the Bn and things in general. I think the old man was quite surprised and got an eye opener. I am afraid I got quite hot under the collar. He said after agreeing with most things I said "Mac you musn't take things so seriously. They will sort themselves out". I ask you, what can one do? It does get me down really and I feel quite depressed and feel that I am shirking my duty in this show. However I will not involve myself in a grumble, I always have you which makes up for all things.

Lady Cloy came in this morning and had a chat. She is the most amusing little thing. I rather like her. Very unassuming and pleasant.

Andy has left now and I shall have no one who I really like left in the Bn. Actually I shouldn't make such a sweeping statement. Some of the fellows are grand. You must meet Harry Langworthy some time. Young but frightfully jolly and full of heart. There is also a fellow called Bond who is rather a good bloke.

The young fellow in with me just now has just been telling me about his 'fiasco'. They were engaged just before he came out. He is very young and so is she by the looks of things they both are head over heels with each other. One thing leads to another and it just reminds me that we shall have been married two years in a week or two. I don't think there is a happier man than me in having made my choice of you. I think that we have accomplished the perfect and the way god meant it to be. Do you feel that as well darling.

I have immersed myself in a book of Pat Slade's called the "Truth about Russia". Very well written and interesting. I always have a secret desire to go to Russia but know that really I never shall somehow. Excuse my vagueness. I have decided (you must not laugh at me darling) that having neglected my studies when younger that something must be done now so I read big books with long words and a Dictionary perched on a table nearby. I shall catch up on you one day. The worst of it is that I have not got the memory you have. I should be far happier putting rings on a piston of a steam engine. However I don't think anybody has died by trying to learn out of books.

I have read through this letter and find I have written some pretty average 'bilge'. But I like rambling.

Well my darling I must leave you and make a non-stop flight to the bathroom. Lots of love and please take care of yourself and Alan and do as I suggest. I won't be long now.

Bless you sweet,  
Xxxx Donald xxxx

3.2.1943 Welsh Mission

My sweet,

Another letter from you. We are being good now and I am getting so I reckon your letters by the hour and not by days. No I am still in hospital and shall be for a few more days. They are taking no chances with my bursting enthusiasm at getting back to work! Talking of bursting things I nearly burst with pride at cracking the Statesman Crossword in 3 hours today. Pretty good what! Your thin husband is getting on.

I think that I am steadily going bats actually, because I have gone completely nuts on Russia. I have written down to the Pelman place in Calcutta and ask them to teach me Russian just like that! So ifsky you metiki me againski please do notski be surprised at the way I talk. Russians as you know have thousands of dialects so I have left the entire problem of the most popular dialect to Mr Pelman. Hope he can oblige me. What about learning it with me. You know "enter Vodka, down with beer" sort of thing. This evening I have been amusing myself by listening to a fellow in the R.I.A.S.C. who prides himself by the amount of bribes he takes. Not only that but he sees how much more he can squeeze out [of] these fat Pania's?? No 'bloody' shame at all. I won't enter what I thought or said, it would only make me blush to know that I had accumulated such a vulgar verbosity.

I am so glad [Alan] is being good. I wonder how long it will be before he knows how to be naughty and be like a bag of monkeys. I trust darling you are concealing your little ways or are you teaching him so that Daddy will have two naughty fat things to contend with.

I am afraid I cannot think of any more news. One doesn't get much in the hospital. Of course I could go on for quite a while telling you how much I missed you and how much I loved you. You know that though don't you Totty. Next time I will tell you it will be with you next me.

All my love sweetest girl,  
Yours ever Donald

8.2.43 Welsh Mission,

My darling,

I think that the mails have gone to pieces again because I have not had a letter from you for a few days. However darling I am not complaining. You have been nearly as good as I have! I have just seen the doctor and I am leaving here on Wednesday this being Monday. Just as well really because it is very nice here and such things as long baths and excellent food cannot just be thrown away.

I went out yesterday by myself for a walk through the wood down to the Bishop & Beadon Falls which supply the Electric Current for Shillong. They are a wonderful sight I must admit. Terrific drop. [There are photos and articles on the internet.]

My bedmate has had his operation and has made a very quick recovery with no complications as I had. Some people are lucky. Yesterday afternoon I went out to tea with the Russel's (Dr). They are a grand couple. They lost all in Burma and he only gets about Rs 450 a month. It does seem a shame. He could quite easily be a Lt/Col in the I.M.S. if he wanted but seems devoted to this work. They have all those children too which must really be a terrific burden. Still it shows it can be done and there is hopes for us yet darling! Mrs Russel asked after you and Alan. She even remembered his name and she asked me if I had any photos of him. I have sent some over today so she can have a look.

I am still ??? about Russia and learning the language. I think it will be rather interesting don't you? What about learning it with me sweetheart. We could go about being very swank by the occasional 'eki' to our words. I am sending Rs 400 this month darling. If you want more please let me know because I have it here.

Well sweetheart excuse this rather sketchy letter but there is really no news.

Things are developing alright and I may see you very soon now.

All my love,

Yours always, Donald

10.2.1943 Elephant Falls

My sweetheart,

Back to the joke and feeling pretty good. Just received one of your letters which was delayed by a pretty little girl carrying it round in her pocket. Have just received another letter in which you were in an awful temper sweet. Please go back to the hotel if the food is not good enough for Alan. Rather that than for him to get really ill. I am sorry for you darling, it must be an awful amount of work but I hope by now that you have a decent Aya. You must not work yourself up. You know darling that I feel just the same. I hate the mess and only wish that you and I could have our own little bungalow with everything the way we want and we can do just as we want to do.

The[y] battalion generally I think is still bad and I have made a resolution to find the root of the trouble. I think that it lies with the B.O's and senior Indian Officers. I am going to tell the C.O. this and make one or two suggestions to improve it even if it means getting into hot water. I think that the C.O. will listen to me. I sincerely hope so anyway because I have great faith in the man.

I found Dina and Jenny in excellent condition and Jenny has grown out of recognition although I am afraid the little thing is a bit wild. I am afraid I have not got much time to get down to training here as we are frightfully busy just now.

By all means I shall send the money. Darling you are frightfully good about spending. I feel as if you are not getting or taking a proper share in things. Please have what you want.

I am so sorry this is so short and sketchy but the mail is going now so I must close. I shall write tonight and see if I cannot make things a bit better.

All my love and take care of yourself and Alan,

Yours ever & ever,

Xxxx Donald xxx

6 March 1943 Mac from 14 Adv. Base P.O.

My darling girl,

I feel awful just now and need you terribly. Not a very good beginning to a letter but I am beginning to hate everything and everybody in this damn place. To me everybody seems so short sighted and smug. The C.O. is a useless old man and our wonderful 'Les' trails him round like a dog. I have never seen a person suck up so much as he does. They both sit back and talk a lot and everybody else does the work. Honestly I am sick of it and if it wasn't for you I should go flat out and have a row and get out of it. Its criminal the whole outfit. The men themselves are grand, you couldn't have a better lot. I think I might bear it if you were here or I could see you darling girl. You really are everything. I simply don't know how I am going to go on being parted. I think of you all day now. You are never out of my mind. Its your fault and my only wish is that you love me as much Iris. You do don't you sweet. Say you do, say you miss me say you can never stop loving me. As far as I can see the earliest possible time that I have of seeing you is going to be July. God knows Iris how I am going to stick things as long as that. Still [for] your sake and for mine I shall try. Remembering you and the times we have been together makes me gloriously happy for a time and only when I am brought with [a] jolt to the ground do I realise how silly this all is and wonder why we shouldn't always be together and happy. We will one day won't we sweet. You do love me a lot don't you. I am absolutely frantically in love with you and you must know that. Well sweetheart it is next morning and I feel a lot better for having written the above although I am quite sure you will think I am mad. The mail is just about due in so I am waiting in the office doing odd jobs until I see if there is anything in it. I don't suppose you would have written after my effort but I live in hopes. NO letter darling still you have been very good and I have been the naughty one.

I must get this into the post today so bye bye just now.

Always yours darling, Donald

Kiss my boy for me.

#### 10.3.43 14 Advance B.P.O.

My darling girl,

I apologise for my miserable effort this morning. I seem to do a lot of apologising. I am naughty at times I suppose but it's not done with any intention. I am sitting outside my tent and it has cooled down considerably, thank goodness. It gets pretty warm down here at times. I am dying to hear from you soon and get those indignant letters which will make me feel frightful for a time but I hope that they will improve. Also I am dying to hear whether you love me as much as you used to. You always used to say in your letters how much you missed me but now I suppose you are getting used to me. The time however isn't far now when I see you again and then we shall put things right.

There is no actual news. Dina, Jenny and myself lead a pretty secluded life and I am getting frightfully "jungli" again. Eat my food with both hands etc. You have to train me all over again when I come back to you. I still have a lot of work on hand and beside doing my Adjutants work I am doing unofficial S.S.O. of the station. I see nothing but paper all day long. My day usually extends from 7 in the morning until 9 or 10 a night. Still I like having plenty to do and should get fidgety (how do you spell the word anyway) if I had to sit round all day. I am looking forward very much to this new job of Training Bn. Commander. You shall definitely have to help me sweet. This time you will have to come in to my office and I shall give you office hours and maybe some nice uniform. Of course the main thing is that we shall be together and have our nice little bungalow all over again. This time I have great hopes of it remaining as such for a long time. I shall try also to get some really good and decent blokes for officers. I am



allowed six at least. Two of them Captains. I might be able to wangle Andy as one. I hope so. Reading through this the writing is awful and I am drivelling a lot but I like it as I said before. Especially when I have you to do it to.

I have had a lot of trouble with one of my ears the last two weeks. No pain but just deaf in one. I have had it cleaned out but up till now it has made no difference. Rather annoying but I hope it will not get worse. Otherwise I am feeling fit as a fiddle. I take long walks in the evening as exercise and feel that I might try something more energetic soon. I won't however overdo it darling I promise you that. I am going to leave this now and had a bath and shall write the balance in bed after dinner. You don't need to read it if you don't want to but I was just going to tell you how much I love you. This time I really shall try. You must get very fed up with my efforts.

No luck, the 2nd in Command turned up and we were having conferences to God knows what time darling so I am afraid I just flopped into bed and slept like a log. I am just awaiting the post now to see if there is any news. I hope so because I haven't had a letter for a few days now.

I have had a terrific row with our 'Les' and told him just what I thought of him and as usual of course I said something which I didn't mean to say later on. I called him a 'Slum Rat' and he broke down. Pretty unfair of me and I feel awful about it but still I got off my chest a thing which I had meant to for a long while.

Well darling I must leave you as there is NO news of you in the post. Still I mustn't complain.

All my love dearest heart and my love to family and my precious boy.

Kiss, Donald

2.4.43 14 Advance B.P.O. Assam Regt.

My darling,

I apologise for my effort this morning. I was just suddenly lugged away. These things happen without ones knowing. By the way who is the new victim - Hugh Something. You are mothering all over India with I must see if I can't try that too. I mean by getting some of Madras girl friends to motor me about a bit. I must say I never thought of that dodge before!! Blast Hugh and all my Madras girl friends, there aren't any anyway. I wish I could drive you about. The only blasted person who has a right to can't! Anyway we must not grumble I might be in the middle East or some other part of the world for all I know, thousands of miles away and would be horrible wouldn't it? Never mind no fear of that yet. I wonder darling could you let me know if you could look after Diana & Jenny for a while. I am afraid that it is very hot here and the poor things feel it very badly. I could send them up with Gulab and your brown trunk if you like. Let me know soon please sweet.

I have been most unfair about this letter. This is the third time I have been whisked off and I am afraid I didn't get down to writing again all yesterday. Very naughty of me I know darling. Your letters and getting through but the[y] wait and collect one or two and then send them on which is very annoying. [rest missing]

27 April 1943 from Mac 2 Assam Rgt. 14 Adv. B.P.O

My own darling, Arrived back at Camp for a day or two and found your lovely letters. Really nice ones and it made me feel so happy and contented. You have no idea how much I worry about how you and Alan are getting along and when I get lovely letters like those last few it makes me feel, as I say, contented. Alan seems to have quite

recovered and I thought the snaps very good. He has grown hasn't he. I must see him soon. I will actually. I shall be up on leave soon darling and soon as I can believe. We shall have some fun then too. I am glad you are having a gay time but feel awfully jealous of all these men hanging round you. Still darling I think you love me enough not to kill me by falling for someone else??!

I came back as I say with an awful liver and have been chewing everybody's head off since I have been here. I think I need some leave and if I don't get some I shall go 'pots'. If I don't get out of this rut I shall go crackers too. The officers men etc are alright and you could not wish for better there is one snag that is the C.O. I hate him now and have got to the state of arguing heatedly about anything he says at table or anywhere. I think he is gradually seeing through it all and I hope we have the inevitable 'show down' soon. I can't go on with this hidden grouse and contempt inside me much longer. If only the Censor wouldn't read this I could let or would like to let you know a lot more. Shall soon. By the way bust before I forget. When I come up on leave want plenty of picnics with you Alan and your Mummy. You know how your Mummy makes up the tiffin basket, well like that. I could do with one like that now. Another thing darling which is an extremely urgent and serious affair is my not yet writing your Mummy. I feel awful about it and really I deserve a thick ear. Shall let her clout me but not too hard!

I am really very sorry and I will write honestly within a day or two. I enclose by the bye another letter from Mummy. She seems quite happy about things in general. Missing my father a bit.

By the way I arrived back and found Gulab still with poor Jenny and Dinah. Says he didn't have enough money after having given him Rs 100/-. Just trying to pull a fast one. Shall send him off soon.

Well my love must have a bath. An event which shocks some of my woolliest Nagas and I have no screen to protect my birthday suit and they can't see why I should bath at all. I must feel & smell pretty foul just now because coming down on the train I noticed one or two people edging of[f] in other directions. I pretended it wasn't me & kept looking at the next person. Awful situation for one so self conscious!!?

Look after yourself Iris and my little boy.

I love you I love you, Yours always & always, Donald

## 20 THE REST OF THE WAR: MAY 1943 TO AUGUST 1945

N.B. THE SOURCES FOR THIS CHAPTER ARE MUCH MORE FRAGMENTARY. HERE I HAVE JUST ASSEMBLED SOME OF THEM IN A PRELIMINARY WAY. THEY WILL NEED TO BE INTEGRATED AND RE-WRITTEN SUBSTANTIALLY.

The scene can be set by a few poems written by my mother during this period.

### **I am so proud...**

I am so proud when you left my side  
You did the things we both had planned for you  
And climbed into our dreams, and there astride  
Rode recklessly as I had known you'd do.  
For while there is an evil to be fought  
We move together, I am not cowed.  
I cannot harbour any fearful thought  
I am so proud.

I will not sigh because the life we planned  
Must not be lived, our time will surely come.  
I will be patient, it is your command  
Until the day when I can lead you home.  
And should you find a better way to go  
At the least the love we have can never die.  
Whatever happens I would have you know  
I will not sigh.

I have no fear, although I know you lead  
A perilous path, through blood and sweat and tears.  
Because of you, I can lift up my head  
And see beyond these anguished- breeding years.  
There in the future, we shall surely find  
Reality for all that we hold dear.  
So looking always forward not behind  
I have no fear.

July 1943 I.M.

[There is a published version which is slightly different.]  
(attached is an original hand-written version)

[No date, during the war:]

### **I have come to the end of the world**

I have come to the end of the world & you are not here

You, who promised yourself unto this hour  
I have climbed to the height of pain, alone to bear  
My souls distress in my heart's lonely tower.

I can remember now nothing of peace  
Of all our dreams fulfilled, hand seeking hand.  
Love's burning restlessness & love's release  
Blind footsteps treading out our Promised Land.

I have forgot the dearness of each waking  
Speaking your name because it sounded good  
Sudden kisses & sudden tears, breaking  
The splendid comfort of shared solitude.

It is night and I am alone, alone, my lover  
The darkness weighs on me. I am afraid,  
Come to me now and take my burden over  
Bid my pain cease – your voice must be obeyed.

Out of a night like this did you awake me  
To teach me love's tempestuous tear-drawn bliss,  
Now, when my flesh is troubled, would you forsake me  
Nor let me rest myself beneath your kiss?

[There is another slightly different version, written in 1942-3 from the contents and hand]

Poem in Iris' handwriting found at the end of her mother Violet's 1943 diary

I have surrounded you with thoughts as bright  
As the Spring sunlight piercing through a cloud,  
I have spoken your name in a voice sure and proud,  
Have put my cowardly fears for you to flight;  
I have kept your eager ardent face in sight  
Nor ever voiced my loss of it aloud;  
I have given you victory and not a shroud;  
Nor ever asked of you as once I might.

And when you make your journeys to and fro'  
Through murky cloud and darkness and the blast  
And other far more dangerous winds that blow  
No fear of mine shall deeper shadow cast:  
My thoughts shall hold your knighthood close and fast,  
They shall go with you whersoever you go.

[In Granny's handwriting: 'There was never anybody but you' – Phyllis said of Arnold.  
Think of me as apart in the dimness – yours still, you mine; and so to where I wait  
come gently on - ]

### **Iris's account: (longer version of 'Daughters')**

I travelled to Quetta to have my daughter, Fiona, repeating my mother's journey across the Sind desert in the fifth month of pregnancy. My father was stationed in Quetta and there was a chance that Mac would get on a Staff College course, so I set off on another of the three day train journeys that were an everyday part of life in India. This time, being pregnant, I hired a servant to help me, a man of whom I knew nothing except what his references told me, but we all knew that references were written by professionals according to standard rules and not to be relied.

Indian trains had no corridors, and yet I was perfectly happy to share a carriage for hours on end with an unknown Indian who could slit my throat, steal my money and disappear without the slightest chance of being caught. I could, and did, allow this stranger to take Alan for walks along the platforms absolutely trusting him not to let stray dogs or beggars touch his charge, without even a passing thought that he would kidnap him. At the end of the journey I paid him his wages and sent him back without a word of thanks, like a drover's dog.

I treated all servants like that. The Gurkha ayah who took Alan for walks on her back, washed his clothes, played with him patiently and inventively for hours on end, I sacked straight away when she asked for a rise in her tiny salary. In Shillong, I let the police remove the bearer and beat him half to death because I thought he had stolen a few rupees from my purse. He crept back, bruised and shaking, and picked up his belongings wrapped in a cloth and walked away without a word of reproach, innocent but cowed. Goodness, if he had complained I would have reported him to the police again.

We all thought we were good to our servants; servants loved their Sahibs we claimed, as we measured out the spoonfuls of rice and arrived home at three in the morning expecting to find the entire staff there to give us a meal. In fact, we treated them as a sub-species, barely human, certainly without feelings. Young English women screamed at men old enough to be their fathers, who could never answer back. Drunk young men at the bar shouted and cursed staff old enough to be their grandfathers. Nobody that I can remember ever said thank you. I mourn for all those mannerless years and find little excuse for myself.

Quetta was in Baluchistan, on the edge of India, high and cold and bare except that when watered and warmed by the spring and autumn sun it burst into amazing flower and fruit; apricots and grapes, dahlias and daffodils, walnuts and wallflowers, everything grew in Quetta between being frozen by the kajak winds of winter and being boiled by the summer sun. Its people were tall and hawk-like, men and women of the high passes, as different as they could be from the golden-skinned, slant-eyed Khasis. I don't know why it had been chosen by the British for their staff college, being remote at the end of a long, desert train journey; perhaps its emptiness made it right for route marches and firing off guns. In the war when I was there, it was a fairground. Every night was party night; non-stop we danced and drank and celebrated, though with small reason. Famine in Bengal could be brushed aside, but the war not.

Many couples met for this one year together and were jubilantly happy and in love. I was invited to take part in the fun and frolics. I was twenty two and as pretty as I was ever

going to be. The dry air seemed to act as an aphrodisiac, and there was the usual ratio of fifty men to one woman so it was like one long Paul Jones, with a rush of men to capture the spare women when the music stopped. Perhaps if there had been contraceptive pills available I would have lost my head and had an affair, but I was too petrified of becoming pregnant even to contemplate it; within marriage it was a nagging worry, outside it - a nightmare.

Quetta was totally army, everyone was in uniform, even a lot of the women. After a few months I got a letter from one of the top brass saying I wasn't pulling my weight in the war effort, that I should leave my children with the ayah as did other wives, and work in the Bomber Shop. This was a craft shop whose proceeds went towards winning the war, and was always over-staffed. I wrote back and said my children were more important than the war, and that I considered it sufficient that my husband was likely to lose his life in the Cause. Perhaps this cheeky missive stopped Mac getting posted to Quetta, because that was the way the army worked. A friend who was beautiful and sophisticated and spent a busy year entertaining the right people was rewarded by having her husband posted to Brigade Major, Quetta.

When we weren't whooping it up at the club or mess, we went out into the country on extravagant shooting parties, with crates of whisky and hampers of food and a regiment of servants and beaters. I don't know who paid for all this, perhaps the proceeds of the Bomber Shop. We lit crackling fires and sang under the stars as in the Seaford days. Quetta was bitterly cold in the winter, and the poor got frostbite because of lack of fuel, but we always had plenty. The sweeper came round the house in the morning lighting fires in every room. I remember him squatting in his cotton rags in front of the newly lit logs, and holding up his thin hands for a moment or two before moving on. Strange how that image has stayed with me so clearly, and yet at the time it was nothing special, sweepers always wore rags poor creatures.

There was always something to celebrate in Quetta, you would have thought we were in the middle of a peace time boom instead of half way through a tricky war. We climbed into fancy dress for any reason at all: a birthday, the bombing of Dresden, a second front opened, and at last, two years after I had fled Shillong, the defeat of the Japanese at Kohima. There was an all night binge when these fantastic new bombs were dropped on Hiroshima, and the peace that followed called for streamers all over the club for a week under which parties continued without a pause.

### **My father's war:**

Here are a few notes on why my father did not end up at the battle of Kohima etc.

Peter Steyn, Assam Regimental History,

p.5 "A number of officers had arrived and it was part of the good fortune of those early days that they included tea planters D.K. Macfarlane, L.S. Davis and A.D. Cleland who knew the country and were masters of improvisation."

Richard Lowe adds: This was in June 1941 when the Regiment was raised by Major Ross Howman in Shillong.

p.20 "Major I.N. Macleod, who had joined the 1st Battalion Assam Regiment a few weeks earlier, was selected to command a new battalion and with him went Captain Macfarlane and several other more recently posted officers."



Lowe: This was in April 1942 when the 2nd Battalion was raised in Shillong. The Battalion moved to Ranipet in Madras on railway protection duties in March 1943. The history relates that the men of the Battalion were not happy with the state of uncertainty in which they lived so far from their homelands, which were being directly threatened by the Japanese.

p.136: "The new unit, as it got down to the tribulations of basic training, remained as happily free from either internal or external distractions of a domestic or political nature, as had its senior sister battalion before it. Captain D. K. Macfarlane, the Adjutant, and Lieutenants Davis and Manilal Barua had learnt the hard way of trial and error with the 1st Battalion, and they could now give invaluable assistance to the Commanding Officer in handling the special problems which would arise."

Lowe: This was prior to the move to Ranipet mentioned above. My father took over command of the 2nd Battalion on 21.8.44 after Kohima. I assume that both our father's served together in the 2nd Battalion. My father handed over command on 2.9.45. by which time the 2nd Battalion had moved to Bethnagar near Bangalore. [above taken from an email]

## **Baby's Biography**

Here is a lock of Baby's hair clipped on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> October 1943 [still attached on page - very fair] by the barber. Aged 21 months. His first haircut.

## **Story of Our Baby Year by Year (Fiona)**

### **Announcement**

Was born on: April 1st 1944  
At: 4.24 p.m  
At: Quetta, British Military Hospital

### **Autographs**

Mother: Iris Macfarlane  
Father: blank

Our baby was named: Fiona Stirling

Godmother: Susanne  
Godfather: Richard [absent]  
Church: St Mary of Bettany, Quetta  
Clergyman: Rev. J.R. Bynam

### **Measurements at birth:**

Weight: Seven lbs  
Length: 21 ½" (3 weeks)

Circumference of head: 14 ½" ( 3 weeks)

Remarks: A very definite sort of baby with a lot of hair & loud lungs – ugly but sweet. Very large feet, slightly hammer-toed! Neat ears, nice skin, pointed chin, turned up eyes which she hated opening.

#### Identification Marks

Colour of eyes – At birth – Dark blue, later blue-grey, blue

Colour of Hair – Dark brown

Brows: brown

Lashes: light brown

Complexion Scarlet, fading to pink at 3 weeks

Baby's first steps.

Holds Head Up: From birth

Sits up Alone: 7 months 1 week

Crawls: February 23rd, 10 ½ months. Not a real crawl, propels herself along with one foot, sitting on the other.

Stands: February 23rd – stands in cot & play-pen. March 6th rises to feet alone & stands.

1st April. 1st Birthday walks across nursery pushing wooden horse. April 9th takes a few steps alone.

Early Discoveries.

Grasping Objects: Tentatively 3 ½ months, definitely 4 months.

#### First Birthday

How Celebrated: With small tea party & large cake

Those Present Were: Davis ?Lans, Jane Petigrew, Bunny Wight

Gifts: Wooden horse, bib. A very cold day so party indoors. Fiona behaved perfectly, ate the icing off her cake, & looked adorable with a white ribbon in her hair.

Rest not filled in, except...

#### Record of Growth

One week – 7 lbs

Two weeks – 7 lbs 8 ozs

One month – 8 lbs 10 ozs

Two months – 10 lbs

Three months – 11 ½ lbs

Five months – 14 lbs

Seven months – 16 lbs

Nine months 17 ¼ lbs

One year – 20 lbs [marginally heavier than Alan at this age]

**Richard visits in late 1944.** [From first draft of 'Road to Mandalay']

There followed blissful convalescence at Mussoorie, a Himlayan hillstation whose mountain air revived me and leave with my parents at Quetta in what is now Pakistan, where my father now worked. It was a journey that showed India's railways'

communicative face. Change at Lahore on to the crack train, the Karachi Mail, change at Rohri Junction in the heart of the Baluchistan desert, one of the hottest spots in the whole sub-continent. Then up the spectacular ravine of the Bolan Pass, pushed and pulled up what I believe is the steepest broad gauge line in the world with escape lines in case the train lost control. Onto the beautiful plain of Quetta where winter brought snow and summer a gentle heat in which the British could find relief from the searing heat below and where the army set up its Staff College. My father, having finished his career but unable to return home to retire, was employed as Mess Secretary, an old warrior catering for the needs of the rising stars of the army he had served those years ago; a last service.

## Violet's Diary

**1943** (Dear Will with best love from Mater) – the 1942 memorandum (see elsewhere) are by Will, but then the diary is used by Violet

[In front pocket, a certificate from the Equity and Law Life Assurance Society, Herts. Policy Number 30879 Premium: £18.6.3 Due date 30 Oct 1943. Name Lt Col. W.R. James. Sum Assured £2000 & Additional Benefits. Renewable for 3 months

At front: in Granny's hand, a list of the contents of 15 boxes

- 1 Kennel – R[obert's] 2 tents moh?? With 2 camel tu??
2. Black tin in crate – letters – painting things – 2 rugs
3. Gray tin – R's bricks & 2 rugs (small)
- 4 Wooden Box. Canvas pictures
- 5 Wooden Box. Stores & jams
6. Grey Box in gunny [gunny sack, made of burlap, for transporting]– my own things
7. Tin box in gunny – Will's clothes
8. Playbox. R's books
9. Wooden box – water colours & glass (pielau?)
10. Wooden box – Books
11. Wooden box – silver & linen
12. Grey in gunny – silver & linen
13. Trunk in gunny – Best linen & photos
14. Barrel with dinner & tea services
15. Cooking pots.

Memoranda at front:

Chen – 8 Meriden Court, Chelsea S.W.3

[in other ink, but also by Violet, underneath]

“Think of me as withdrawn into the dimness, yours still, your mine: so to where I wait come gently on”

Recipe for Cornish pasties – detailed

19.6 Mac arrived

21.6 Roy arrived

13.7 Mac left

28.7 Will came up

6.8 5 p.m. Humm

10.8 Durzie pd Rs 14/- [various other payments]

15.8 Letter from Chen  
 16.8 Airgraph from Chen 31/7  
 17.8 Letter card to Chen  
 23.9 Letter of July 3rd from Chen:  
 25.9 Air Letter card Chen  
 14.9 Left Naini  
 6.10 Airgraph to & from Chen  
 15.10 Went to hospital as ward supervisor  
 19.10 Started to work at Dist.  
 23.10 Sent parcel to Chen & Winidred & Airgraph to Mother & Chen.  
 [continues to mark periods with a cross]  
 10.12 Go Lahore [dog show] McGregor Best Dog.  
 30.12. D.Cap 65. Iris.  
 [back of diary. A.K.Macfarlane c/o Continental Mexican Rubber Co., Estacion  
 Comacho, Mexico;  
 R[ichard's] address: H.Q. 111 In: Inf. Bde  
 143 Milt Camp P.O. 143, Narhat P.O. Via Lalitpur G.I.PCy  
 Billy's Account 438298 6 Pall Mall]  
 [recipes for Orange or lime juice, and detailed recipe for orange marmalade  
 [in front pocket a short poem written in Iris' hand - 'I have surrounded you with  
 thoughts s bright...' put in folder of Poems]

[1944 - part of Will's diary is filled in by Granny. See under Will for the rest -  
 Granny's part is....

**1944** front: W.R.James, 526 Pretoria Road, Quetta, With Mater's best love)

[various accounts and other matters, and first couple of months, by Will - see under his  
 Diaries]

10.3 Durzie came  
 11.3.1944 X not since Nov! (periods)  
 1.4 Fiona born - 4.25 7 lbs.  
 3.4 21 days works pc  
 [various notings of days worked by durzi - Sat. 6 May Memo. 28 days work. Rs 84/-  
 14.4 X (period)  
 5.6 11 a.m. photo  
 8.6 Tea with R. at Baynon's  
 17.6 X self  
 [very little - odd mating of a dog etc]  
 31.7 Paid Durzie up to date 21 days 57/12 Bridge me 4pm  
 1.8 X (period)  
 1.9 22.8 Folly's puppies born - 13 dead - too soon  
 3.9 A.L.C. [Air Letter Card] dated 21.P. from Chen.  
 6.10 Son - stillborn to Eileen ?Tanhu ten ???

[At end, some sums of money: presumably puppies sold  
 Sultana of Willange 150/-  
 Anna 100/-  
 Tolnuts 175/-

Pair 200/- ?  
Rowan 150/-  
Total 770  
1 dog  
2 Bitches  
Rowan to Peters 150/-

1945 – no surviving Diary of Violet

### **Will's Memoranda**

27.7.43 1 month leave at Naini Tal  
28.8.43 Relinquish post of Deputy Director ML & C  
served under following Army Commanders since 1930.  
Shea, Macmullen, Cassells, Wigram, Coleridge, Pitt Taylor, Bard, Broad, Willcox.  
20.9.43 Apptd MEO & EO Quetta for one year  
20.9.44 Mess Sec Staff College

### **Will's Diaries**

1.5 Sully leaves  
2.5 Drive with Malcolm  
3.5 Wrote to Richard  
4.5 Ride with Malcolm to Air Field. Hear Alperi is going. Move to room 40  
5.5 Walk with Mrs Holland dustdown. Dinks at Circuit House  
6.5 Alperis leave for Naini. Lent Holland "Nemesis"  
7.5 Went to Air Field. Write Malcolm Allies take Tunis and Bizerta  
8.5 Order MEOs overseas to Jhansi  
9.5 –  
10.5 Letter from Richard, returning "Ends & Means". Drive with Malcolm. He sends me "The White Cliff" by Alice Duer Miller  
11.5 Letter from Mrs Vincent saying ?bird has arrived. Laburnums looking v. lovely  
12.5 Well near Mall siphoned across road. Prastad returns from Jhansi. No ?Kersuie for ?Shalu. Dinner in room.  
13.5 Von Armin and 150,000 prisoners taken in Tunisia. Churchill in Washington. Lent Malcolm "The White Cliffs"  
14.5 3rd Anniversary of the forming of the Home Guard ages 17-65. One million 600,000 enrolled in 8 weeks.  
15.5 Biked to Air field with Malcolm. Richard has got ADj & QM of Convalescent Home in Viceroy's BG line in Dehra Dun  
Memo: Richards address. 26 CD, Viceroy's Bodyguard Lines, Rajpur Rod, D. Dune  
16.5 –  
17.5 Wrote to Canmp asking for Wallington Quilter or form . Walk with Malcom in Taj.  
18.5 Dams in Ruhr destroyed by RAF  
19.5 Churchill speaks to Congress U.S.A.  
20.5 Walk with Malcolm in Taj area  
21.5 Tunisia Victory celebrations at Ram Lila Suite near Fort

22.5 Getting hotter (114 degrees) Walk with Malcolm at air field. My leave from 28<sup>th</sup>  
 July sanctioned  
 23.5 Temp 116 degrees  
 24.5 Billy passed through Agra  
 25.5 -  
 26.5 Vs birthday. Hear from V about her dogs  
 27.5 Very bot day RE worried about "Jackson Hut"  
 28.5 Discovered officers shop in C.C. 116 degrees  
 29.5 Malcolm leaves for 1 months leave in Naini. Thunderstorm after very hot week.  
 30.5 Lunch with Malcolm at club  
 31.5 Sully arrives back from tour & brings fruit & beer from Violet  
 1.6 forgot to go to drinks with Hyde Frost. Lecture on Wingate Show  
 2.6 Saw AC in office  
 3.6 Saw A.C. re Filose case  
 4.6 A.C. goes on tour. Drinks with Hyde Frosts. Very hot evening  
 5.6 Shukberg gets Kheem Sa??. Biked with Sully to airfield.  
 6.6. 111 degrees. Did not go to office. Walked to Taj Gardens. Very hot evening.  
 7.6 Billy passes through. Saw Billy off at 9.15 p.m. 112 degrees  
 8.6 Medical Exam. Passed fit. 112 degrees  
 9.6 Dust storm in evening  
 10.6 Letter from Richard. 3 years since Italy came into the war. Leditza village  
 anniversary.  
 11.6 Letter from Richard  
 12.6 Got Whisky for Malcolm  
 13.6 Wrote to Richard & Malcolm  
 14.6 United Nations Day. Very Muggy  
 15.6 Drinks with Ledgerson. Heavy Rain.  
 16.6 Got some rations & blankets & Khaki drill for Violet.  
 17.6 Walk with Sully & picked up Lane  
 18.6 Mac arrives (in pencil) Mac did not turn up (in pen) Sent stores etc by Radford.  
 Wrote to Mater  
 19.6 Wavell to be Viceroy & Auchinlech C in C. Lecture by an American from  
 Tunisia. Malcolm takes over from me on 28<sup>th</sup>  
 20.6 Resolved to cut down smokes and drinks  
 21.6 Walked to Hyde Frosts. Mac arrives Naini. Vincent arrives Naini.  
 22.6 Drinks with H Frosts. Walked to Command Mess & got order for 3 botts gin.  
 23.6 Walked to station & posted Vs letter  
 24.6 Walked to Station but too late  
 25.6 Grant offers me Quetta. Express letter to V asking her opinion. Letter from Jack  
 Marshall  
 26.6 V sends letter from Triggs re. Quetta. Very sticky weather  
 Memo: list of luggage 1113 on Adv of TA. Transfer of pension paper. Battle Dress.  
 27.6 Walk with Sully in Taj Gardens. Wrote to Marshall, Richard & Billy  
 28.6 V. agrees to Quetta. Wrote again to Marshall about curtains. Saw Freeman &  
 Ellison about accom Naini  
 29.6 Wrote to Grant agreeing to Quetta.  
 30.6 -  
 1.7 Letter from Roberts  
 2.7 Wrote to Imperial Bank Agra re my pension money. Letter from Merill



3.7 Very oppressive weather since 27th. Saw bungalow 52 where 3 more bungalows could be built.  
 4.7 Went to film "Desert Victory" with Sully  
 5.7 Sully goes on tour. Malcolm returns from leave. A little rain last night & cooler.  
 6.7 Rain - cooler. Mrs Humphrey arrives.  
 7.7 Bank balance on 30<sup>th</sup> June was 2063/-. More rain & cooler.  
 8.7 Went to Treasury and Bank and fixed up Pension amount  
 9.7 Humphrey arrives. German offensive against Russia.  
 10.7 Silver Wedding Day sent V wire "See Psalm 16 v.11" [You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."] Sicily attacked. Met Creffield. Suzanne rang up.  
 Memo: Marshall wants me to reach Quetta on 20th  
 11.7 -  
 12.7 Hear Gravy is going to get MEO job. Walk with Lane  
 13.7 -  
 14.7 Mac arrives 6 hrs late. Rain & cool. Mac couldn't get into train.  
 15.7 Mac leaves by troop special. Malcolm & I go to station to enquire re goods van rate  
 16.7 Biggie comes in for a drink  
 17.7 -  
 18.7 Wrote to Read, Merrill, Shashaz, Paterson. Keeping Jasper for Humphreys  
 19.7 Walk with Malcolm got a wetting  
 20.7 Roy arrives  
 21.7 Walk with Sully. Sully gets Pats job  
 22.7 Iris birthday . Cry off ride with Malcom  
 23.7 Had Malcolm Sully & Callum to dinner  
 24.7 Office photo taken  
 Memo: Bank Bal on 1 April £176

[NB after 24<sup>th</sup> July, the diary becomes very sparse. Only days with entries included.]

27.7 Leave Agra by evening train  
 28.7 My leave starts. Arr Naini 4 p.m.  
 2.8 Lunch with Stewarts. Drinks with Mrs Alfieri  
 4.8 Film "to be or not to be"  
 5.8 Iris goes to Bhowali  
 8.8 Saw film "The land we serve"  
 9.8 Iris returns. Alan. Doctor for Robert. Packed barrel of glass  
 10.8 Two letters from Sondhi. Gen Quinan retires  
 12.8 V. goes to dance  
 14.8. Went to film "Commando"  
 16.8 Wrote to Mater  
 17.8 Two fellows came in for bridge, tea and dinner. Conquest of Sicily completed  
 18.8 Wrote to Grant re. orders for my move. Got pair of shoes & some Kashmiri cloth  
 28.8 My birthday and relinquishment of D.D. [Deputy Director]  
 [various addresses for Richard and Billy]  
 21.8 Saw film Bambi  
 Memo: R. Rhodes James 111 Ind Inf Bd, 51 Adv Base P.O. W.Rhodes James 14  
 Adv base P.O  
 22.8 Said goodbye to Ashtons  
 23.8 Wrote to Sondhi sending cheque for 238/-

28.8 My birthday & relinquishment of job of D.D.

Memo aftr 4th Sept:

Richrds address: HQ 111 Ind Inf Bde, 143 Mily Camp P.O c/ Narhat P.P. via Lalitpur  
GIP rly

15.9 Leave Naini for Quetta

18.9 arrived in Quetta

[after this, the Diary is almost blank]

17-20.10 'Not feeling well'

22.10 Wire from Malcolm sanctioning budget

24.10 Drinks with Hodgsons. Cyril to lunch

15.11 Richard arrives Quetta

19.11 Richard leaves

20.11 Iris arrives Quetta

[nothing more in Diary]

[Memoranda above – see above; also a couple of pages of snippets of poetry, e.g. 'A tale told by an idiot', 'Take o take', 'Tread softly', 'Cloud capped towers' etc.

[Pension £743, or 9912/- Rs 826/- pm from 28.8.1941, Commuted Pension 30,373/- = £2265. Date of Billys Commision 28.1.39

Notes on pay etc.

July Pay 841 Bank 1532

Oct Pay 889 Pension 592

Nov Pay 883 Bank 2189

A few phone numbers and addresses at back. And time of trains, Delhi to Agra

**1944** (front: W.R.James, 526 Pretoria Road, Quetta, With Mater's best love)

details under Memoranda

Pension £743, 826/- pm Commuted. 30373/- = £2263.

Lloyds Bank Balance 15<sup>th</sup> Oct £127-9-5.

Equity & Law Premium £65-15 in Jan. 45. £53-18-4 in Jan. 46 and thereafter same amount. Premium of £69-15-2 for 1944 already paid.

Lloyds Bank Bal 15 Dec 43 £88-3-9 after paying Billy's premium of £29-19-5

[The diary is pretty sparse; after March it is kept – minimally – by Violet]

9.1 Wrote to Bank Berkhamsted to pay Equity and Law Premium yearly instead of quarterly

11.1 Heavy rain

12.1 Richards birthday

18.2 Wrote to Lloyds Bank about Billy's Insurance

[From March onwards it looks as if the Diary was kept by Granny – see under her Diaries]

[At end a few addresses, including ‘Mater, 25 St Margaret’s Road, Oxford, and Richard, Billy and Roy]

At end, various bank balances and pension payments:

31.11.43	Bank Balance	2189
31.12.43	“	1226
5.1.40	Pay	903
9.1.44	Pension	592-10
5.2.44	Pay	1117-18
	Pension	592-10
31.1.44	Bank Bal	1536-6-1
31.2.44	“	2890

also Equity and Law and Canada Life Alliance payments:

69.15.2 1944

65.15 - 1945

Canada Life Alliance

21.11.1 Feb

12.10. April

Richard’s letters (to be pruned)

## **Richard**

28.7.42 3rd Gurkha Regimental Centre, Dehra Dun

Darling Mummie,

Here I am back at work again after those five glorious days I had with you. I can still hardly believe it was true seeing you all again. I’m afraid I was rather off my form as I was never quite well up in Naini. [takes McGregor the dog with him]

June 4th [1943] Signals Training Centre, Mhow, C.I.

Darling Mummie,

I am writing to you on the great occasion of your silver wedding on June 10th. I don’t know quite what one should say on such an occasion except to hope that you will have many more years as happy as the 25 that have just passed.

Here, in Mhow, I have been exploring the haunts of many years ago – 16 to be exact – and everything stands out very vividly in my memory. The evening I arrived I rode round the cantonment. First up to One Tree Hill & then down to our old bungalow. There is stood, just as it was all those years ago – the dobbie’s pond into which Billy once pushed the dobie’s son, the steps at the back on which the bearer used to lay his cricket bat after it had been oiled and under which we once caught a snake, the space behind on which we used to sleep in the hot weather (once in a high wind the beds were blown over), the pond in the front garden into which I remember falling at least once, the servant’s quarters where I used to squat down to eat chappaties – all as they

were 16 years ago. Then I went down past the club – this, too, exactly the same, with the chairs laid out on the lawn – & down to the bazaar past the cinema where we used to go & see Jackie Coogan. It is odd that this period of my life stands out far more clearly than many times after it – I believe Freud has something to say on the subject!

[a very similar letter on the same date to ‘Dearest Daddie’]

8 May 1943 Gurkha Regl Centre, Ghangon, Dehar Dun

Darling Mummie, ....

2nd April [?1944 or 1943] Gurkha Regl Centre, Ghangora, Dehra Dun

Darling Mummie,

I am sending Robert a model aeroplane for his birthday, which I hope will go down well. ... I got a letter from Aunt Hilda yesterday, & it contained the startling news that Olive was married. She had been engaged but had decided to marry after the war. Then her fiancé got embarkation leave & so they decided to marry, which they did at once. Desmond is having an extremely rough time on a destroyer, but enjoying it.

Any more news from Billy? Still silence here. ... A letter from Daddie yesterday. He says it has got considerably hotter at Agra since you left. I don’t know how anyone can stick a place like Agra. ... I hear Naini is looking glorious now. It must be a wonderful change after Agra.

Dec 19th [?1944] 111 Ind Inf Bde 19 A.B.P.O. India Command

Darling Mummie, Daddie & Iris,

I have just returned from some rather strenuous jaunts in time to write my final Christmas letter, which I hope will arrive on Christmas day. It must be icy cold up there just now – the very thing for a really English Christmas.

Dec 27th [?1944] HQ 111 Ind Inf Bd 29 A.B.B.P. India Command,

Darling Mummie, Daddie & Iris,

Thank you very much for the grand Christmas parcel I got from you, & which I have been a lamentably long time in acknowledging. The sweets went over very big at Christmas, the Kipling book is in great demand, & the diary has already saved me from forgetting several things. ... I trust you had a equally cheery – though somewhat colder – Christmas at Quetta. I suppose Billy could not manage to get away? ... I have just this moment received a greetings Airgraph from Barbara Turbett – a very merry piece of paper. They had a letter from Billy a short time before. He talks of very hard training. Desmond gets his leave in early January & they are leaving their celebrations until then.

Jan 13th 1945 c/o Lloyd’s Bank, Bombay [all to 25 St Margaret’s Road, Oxford]

Darling Mummie & Robert,

No news from you, so I hope you are both all right. I suppose you are home now and well settled in to the rigours & regulations of wartime England.

Jan 21st c/o Lloyd’s Bank, Bombay

Darling Mummie & Robert,

I have just heard from Daddie about your safe arrival in England after a very good trip & very pleased I was to hear it.

What are your first reactions of war time England? Cold, damp as usual, shoddy & rather tired out, life a series of registrations & pass books. Maybe not, but I think that is quite a good guess. After 5 years of war it has changed tremendously.

... No news from Billy, but he must be somewhere near Mandalay by now – what a pace they are going in Burma – when the other British forces are standing still.

Jan 24th 1945 c/o Lloyd's Bank, Bombay

... Is Robert still fixed up for Seaford? I imagine that the V 2's are still at work in that area. It is a great pity that there were no vacancies at Oxford.

What do you think of the City? To me it will always be a sort of dream town, so improbable a place quite apart from the ordinary humdrum world.

Jan. 30th 1945 c/o Lloyd's Bank, Bombay

Darling Mummie,

I was delighted to get your air letter today – dated 15th – & to get your impressions of wartime England.

You seem to have got a more favourable impression than I thought you would & to have settled down very quickly. Still, Oxford cannot fail to charm, even on a bleak January evening. ..

I have had letters from Daddie & Iris recently.

12th February 1945 c/o Lloyd's Bank, Bombay

Darling Mummie,

... That school of Robert's sounds a great place, and it will make all the difference to him to have a good start. ... You seem to have picked up a cracking good job, and in remarkably short time. It do hope it is as interesting as it sounds... I am glad, though not very surprised, that you have taken to Oxford.

Feb 20th 1945 c/o Lloyd's Bank, Bombay

Darling Mummie,

I am writing this letter from Lucknow, where I am staying for a short leave with my friends the Thomsons.

27 February 1945 c/o Lloyd's Bank

Darling Mummie,

... I am back from a most delightful leave in Lucknow. ... I got a letter from Daddie today. He gives no definite news about going home, but says he must stay out a bit longer & so help Iris. He certainly needs a rest badly, & we should go home soon.

**Richard letters home during the war**

Extracts only:

To Lt Col. W. R. James OBE MC from Lt R.J.R. Rhodes James 19.3.44

Darling Mummie Daddie and Iris,

...

I trust all is well at Quetta and that Iris' offspring has arrived safely. It must be lovely weather in Quetta now before the heat begins.... Lots of love from Richard.

10 June 1945 Lloyds Bank, Bombay (prob. To St. Margaret's road)

Darling Mummie,

... I heard from Daddie the other day. He says that he intends sailing in November or December, which is good news, as he certainly needs to rest and return to England. Also, unfortunate news about Alan, who has just got dysentery, which I trust will not develop into anything serious.

28 June 1945 Lloyds Bank, Bombay

Darling Mummie,

.... Have just this moment received a letter from Daddie... Apparently Mac is on leave now.... How was Robert at half term? As entertaining as ever, I suppose. He will certainly make a mark in the world....

20<sup>th</sup> August 1945 Lloyds Bank, Bombay to 25 St Margaret's Road,

Darling Mummie,

.... I have heard nothing of Iris' move to Shillong, as I don't get much news from her. Unfortunately I will be too far afield to go there, though I have always wanted to visit that delightful spot.

23<sup>rd</sup> August 1945 Lloyds Bank, Bombay to 25 St Margaret's Road

Darling Mummie,

.... I am so glad about Mac's decision to return to tea and keep a steady job until a real chance comes for something different & better - if he wants it. I don't know much about the prospects of tea after the war, but it is certainly making mighty good money now.

7<sup>th</sup> Oct 1945 G.S.I. H.Q. 34 Ind Corps S.E.A.C.

Darling Mummy,

... I have just had news from Daddy to say that Iris arrived safely at Shillong after an unusually comfortable journey from Quetta. The railways of India must be getting slowly back to normal again.

I hope the house hunting is proceeding satisfactorily in a very house starved England. If Mary Macleish would give up her cottage it seems the problem would be solved.

6 Nov. 1945 Raffles Hotel, Singapore

Darling Mummie,

... I managed to get a delightful little frock - an orange colour one in georgette - which I am sending to Iris for Fiona.



5 Feb. 1946 HQ 554 Sub Area S.E.A.C. to Mrs. W.R. Rhodes James, 25 St Margarets Road, Oxford – crossed through and re-addressed to The Vicarage, Cumnor

Darling Mummie,

The great event has happened. Yesterday I received notification that my release had been approved by the Headquarters India Command subject to my willingness and availability....Several weeks will elapse before I finally set foot in England.... A most welcome letter arrived from Daddie giving the latest news from home. ... I am writing to Christo regarding my aspirations as a schoolmaster, and I hope he has some good advice to offer. Is it true that he is going to retire? I hope to see something of Sedbergh when I get back. I am still wondering what exactly I will do when I get back to Oxford. I have forgotten the little history I did know.... It is a small world. I met at a party a charming little Indian sister who was training at the Welsh Mission Hospital Shillong when Alan arrived. She is going back there on leave and I have asked her to look up Iris.

19th March 1945 Lloyd's Bank, Bombay

... Robert seems to have fitted in well – in fact extremely well – at school. If he does not show any great brainpower, it does not matter. He evidently has great powers of leadership, & that, if it does not get scholarships, certainly gets very good jobs. Savoir faire is almost more essential than brains & certainly impresses more in everyday life.

21 April 1945 c/Lloyd's Bank, Bombay

Darling Mummie,

... How grand a warm April in England can be. I expect the Parks in Oxford are in full bloom & those delightfully cloistered college gardens. St Johns is the best & is about the nearest to you. If you can get transport Boars Hill is a splendid place for a picnic, but I suppose that is rather a big “if”.

... weather in Quetta now before the heat begins.... Lots of love from Richard.

8th May 1945 Lloyd's Bank, Bombay

Darling Mummie,

A very big thank you for the two books...

Well the end in Europe has come at last after so many set backs disappointments & false hopes. The official announcement came through last night at 12.20 after we had been sitting glued to the wireless for the greater part of the day. How you feel at home I can't imagine. Everything is so real & near. Out here we feel only the echoes of the triumph & find it hard to grasp its full significance. After 5 ½ yers it is difficult to realise just what has happened. We are of course preparing a very impressive series of festivities, & the local Maharajah is doing his bit by lending us elephants & camels to lend dignity to the proceedings... ..

Sheila is arriving here today – indeed she must already have arrived. I am going out to dinner with uncle Roy in approximately an hour & I hope to get plenty of news from home.

... P.S. I enclose picture of self. Hope you approve. [There is a photo of Richard in Gurkha hat; and another of two boys on a boat]

25th May 1945 Lloyds Bank, Bombay

[Richard in Karachi] to mother

Your descriptions of VE day celebrations in Oxford were most vivid. What a place for celebrations, with some of the most irresponsible young men of the country gathered together. When I get back there, what a day it will be! With which nostalgic note I will close...

1st June 1945 Lloyds Bank, Bombay

To mother.

You seem to be rather fed up with England now. It must be rather a depressing place especially after the reaction of VE day & I hear that to celebrate the peace there has been a further cut in the rations. This must have come as a bit of a blow to those who thought that victory in the west would bring ample rations & easy times. England is certainly a very shabby place – it never was very smart & after 5 ½ years of war it must be very down at heels. But I don't know how you could prefer India. It always strikes me as a land of despair and frustration, as well as poverty and disease, with the cantonments as a very artificial oasis in the surrounding desert. Still perhaps my lack of the social graces influences me rather.

.... Still no news from Billy. He must be up to his neck in rain & mud – especially the latte. He is now having a crack at the Japs on the road to Indo China, where the going is exceedingly rough & the enemy very determined.

10 June 1945 Lloyds Bank, Bombay (prob. To St. Margaret's road)

Darling Mummie,

... I heard from Daddie the other day. He says that he intends sailing in November or December, which is good news, as he certainly needs to rest and return to England. Also, unfortunate news about Alan, who has just got dysentery, which I trust will not develop into anything serious.

19 June 1945 Lloyds Bank, Bombay

Darling Mummie,

A piece of good news and a piece of not so good. I heard yesterday that I had been mentioned in despatches for last year's show in Burma – & I came into hospital with my 4th go of malaria! ....

India is at the moment in a state of great expectation. The Wavell offer has been well received & the feeling is that if it were rejected another period of stalemate would result. Wavell unfortunately omitted to ask Azad, the president of Congress, to his conference, which caused some annoyance, but he is held in very high esteem by all Indians for his forthrightness & sincerity. The local rag, which is certainly not pro British, goes as far as to call him "the greatest hero of all in the fight for Indian liberty". The way he dealt with the Bengal famine made a very good impression & the Indians think he will cut through the mass of old formulae & prejudices.

28 June 1945 Lloyds Bank, Bombay

Darling Mummie,

.... Have just this moment received a letter from Daddie... Apparently Mac is on leave now..... How was Robert at half term? As entertaining as ever, I suppose. He will certainly make a mark in the world.

3 August 1945 Lloyd's Bank, Bombay

Darling Mummie,

.... The result of the election shook me considerably. While not professing violent prejudices in either direction, I am amazed at an electorate that chucks out such people as William Beveridge & Richard Lane(?). I see that even Churchill's opponent, an 'unknown', got ten thousand votes. The change, I think, is a reaction from the past, & a 'clean sweep' for the future, though it remains to be seen who can sweep the cleanest.

12 August 1945 Lloyd's Bank, Bombay

Darling Mummie,

The message came through this morning that Japan had accepted our peace terms & had ceased hostilities. It is all so sudden that it is difficult to realise what it means: that the whole war is over. It remains to be seen if the outlying Jap forces will fight it out, in which case there will be some more fighting to do. Out here we are going on planning to reoccupy our lost territories in the East Indies, but we are hoping very much that there won't be any need for opposed landings. If the Emperor gives the word, I think most of the Japs will chuck up the sponge. I don't think they can lose face by obeying the Emperor. The snag is going to be the reoccupation of Jap captured territories, as they spread over a vast distance & take up a lot of troops. For myself, I do not expect a swift return home.

20<sup>th</sup> August 1945 Lloyds Bank, Bombay to 25 St Margaret's Road,

Darling Mummie,

... the end of the Jap war is being taken very quietly out here. It is rather comic that England, which has never had much interest in the Eastern war, has celebrated for more jubilantly than the people out here who have done the fighting. ... the cottage at Dunsfold sounds a grand idea. The English countryside has come to mean a great deal to me, & if the rigours of an English winter in the country can be made endurable, we will certainly find wonderful recompense in the spring & summer.

I have heard nothing of Iris' move to Shillong, as I don't get much news from her. Unfortunately I will be too far afield to go there, though I have always wanted to visit that delightful spot.

Reference my remarks above on Dunsfold, for Dunsfold read Rudgewick throughout!

28th August 1945 Lloyds Bank, Bombay

Darling Mummie,

The 'phoney' war out here seems to be petering out at last. We will have to tread very delicately on the Jap islands, as we don't know really what they will do. The higher

ups seem to be playing the game; whether the isolated troops will do the same thing is not so certain.

I have started in on my book. It is really very difficult to know how the stuff will read to other people, & it will be more difficult to know how much space to give to each incident. ...

No news from Daddie or Iris for some time now. With the war completely over Daddie must surely come home soon, though it would be a pity if he arrived at his beloved England in the middle of winter. Iris I have heard nothing from. I did not know she was going to Shillong & in consequence I have no idea what her address is. Can you help me?

I hope Robert has found a circle of friends in Oxford & is enjoying his long summer holidays. Your decision not to go away for the holidays seem to be a wise one, & if other people decided likewise there might be reasonable comfort on the trains.

## ALAN BETWEEN TWO AND THREE



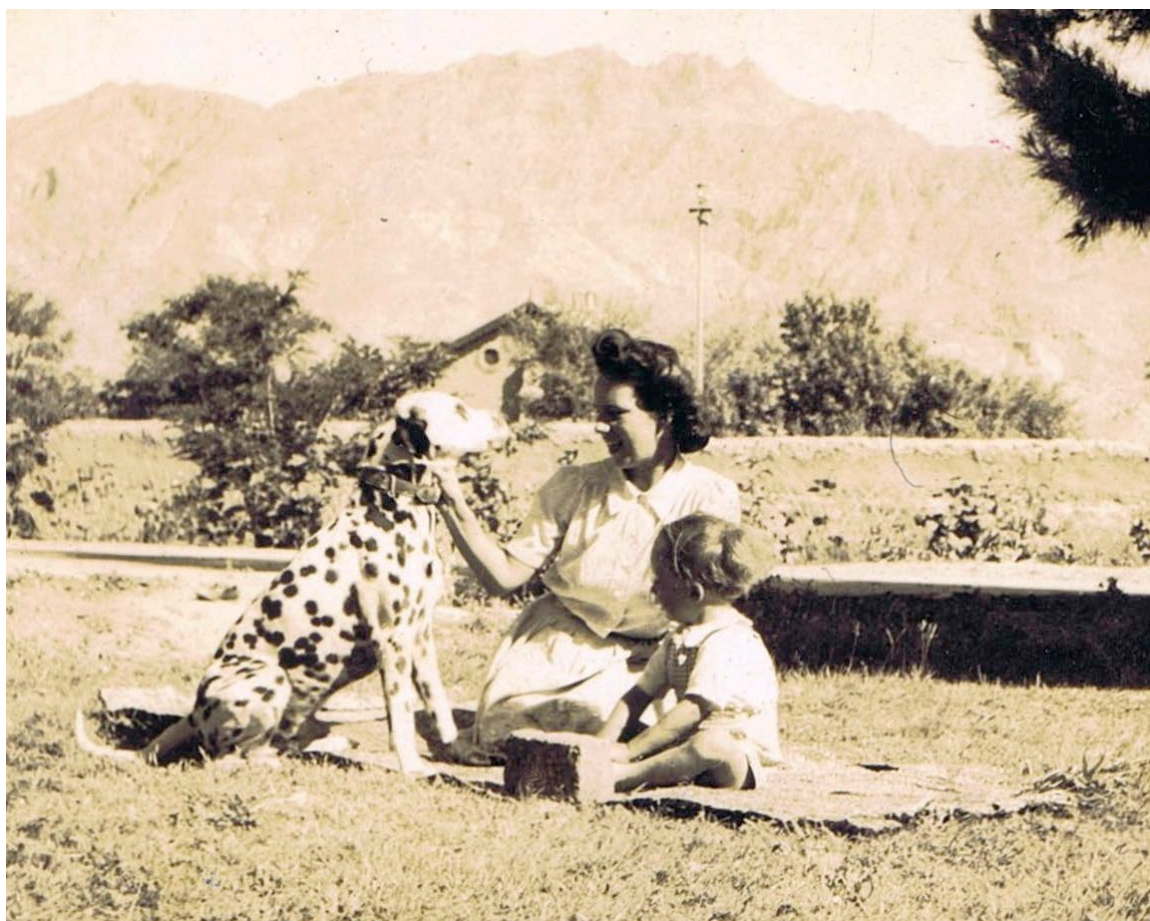














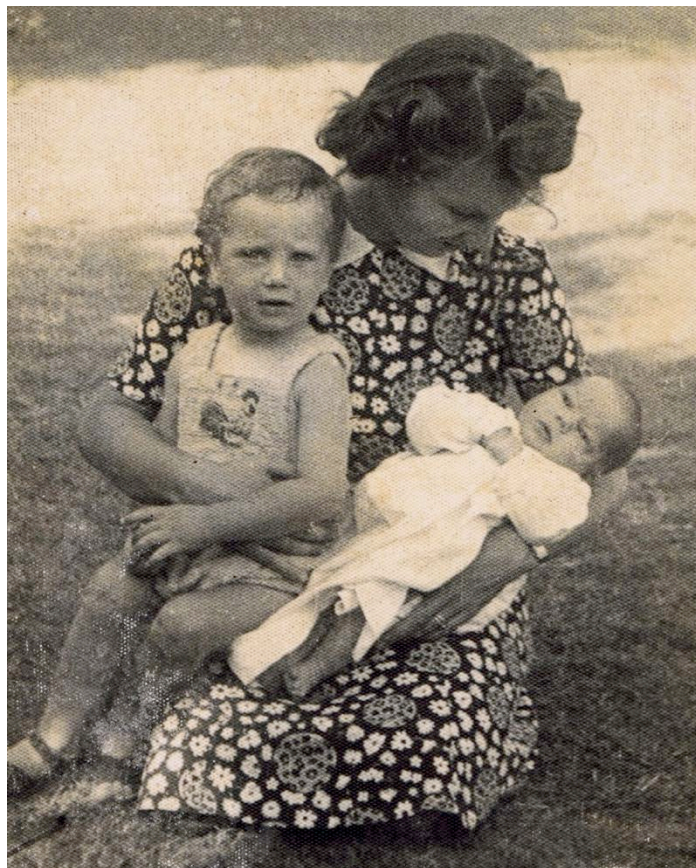
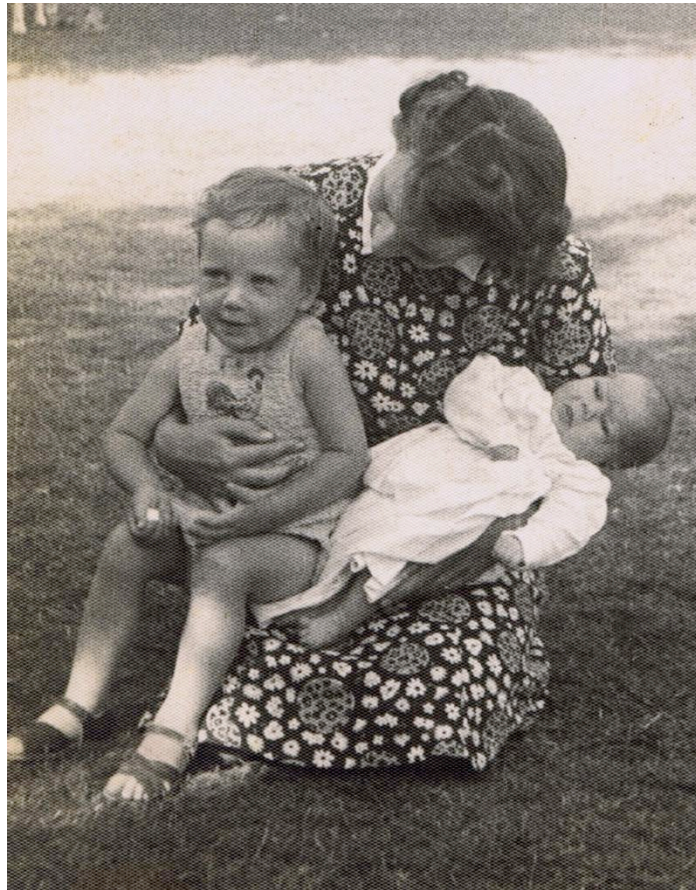












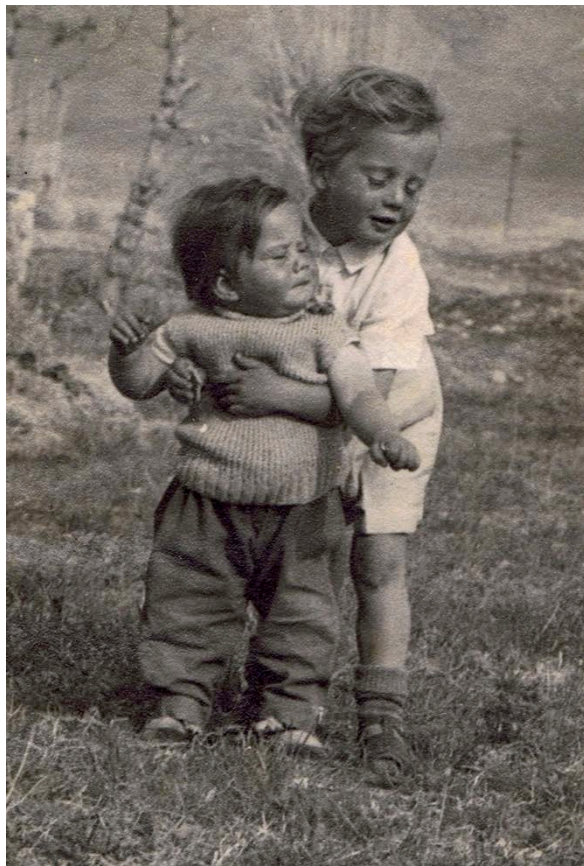




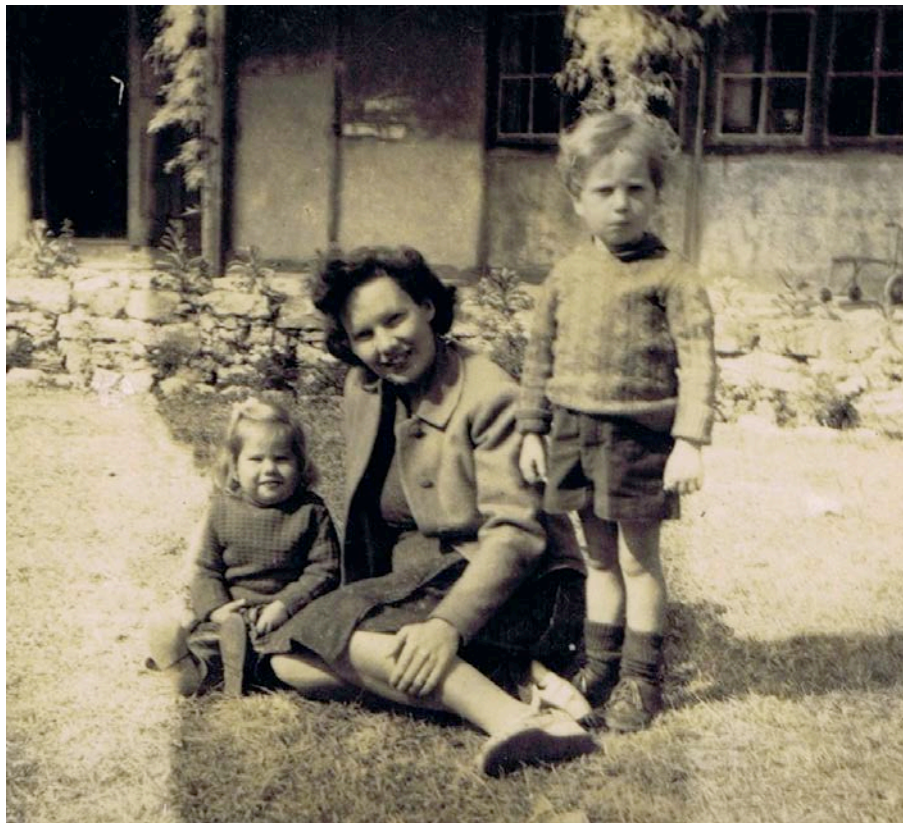
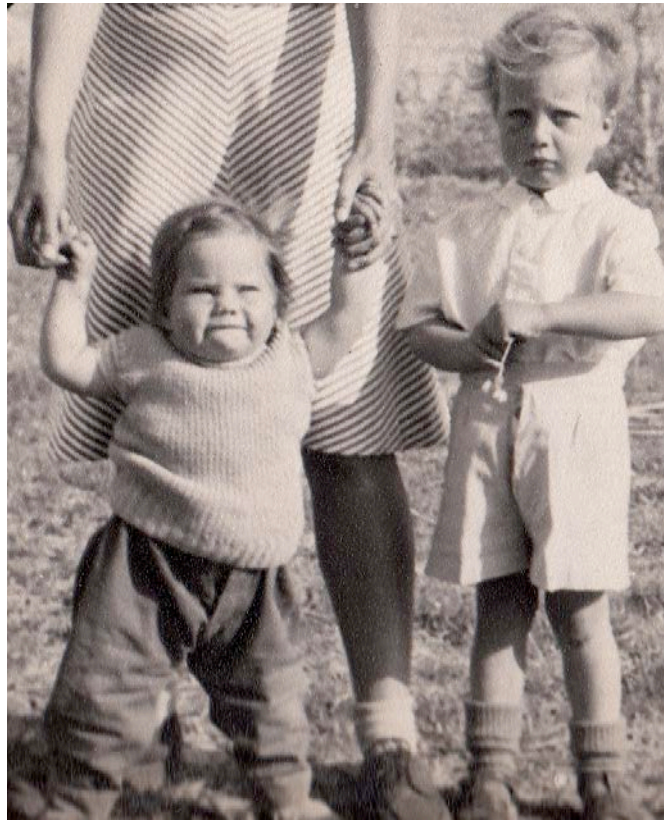


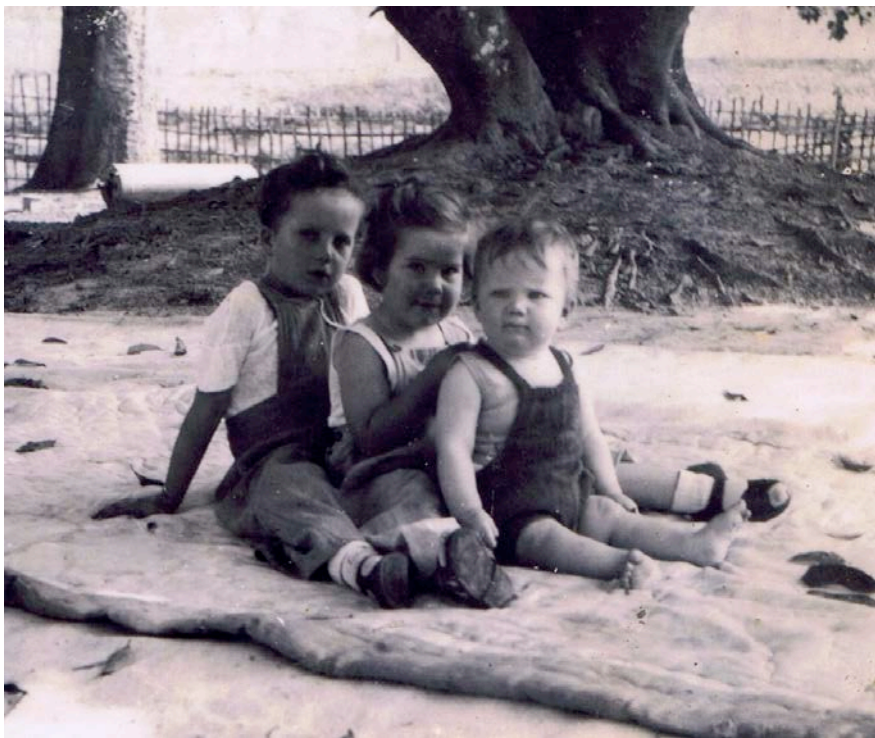
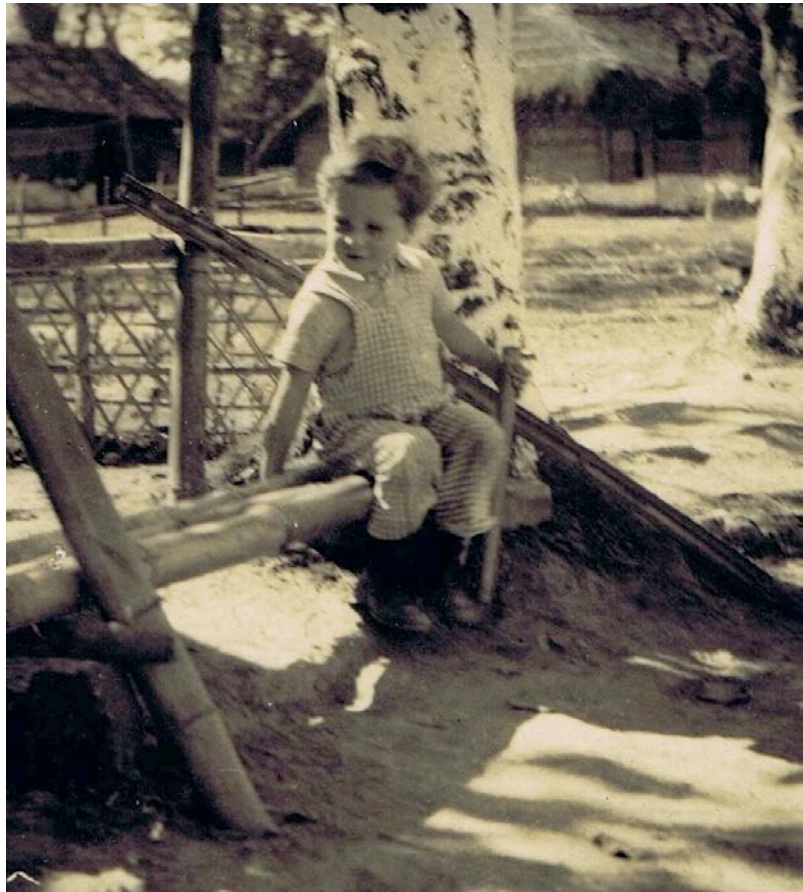


## ALAN AGED ABOUT FOUR TO FIVE

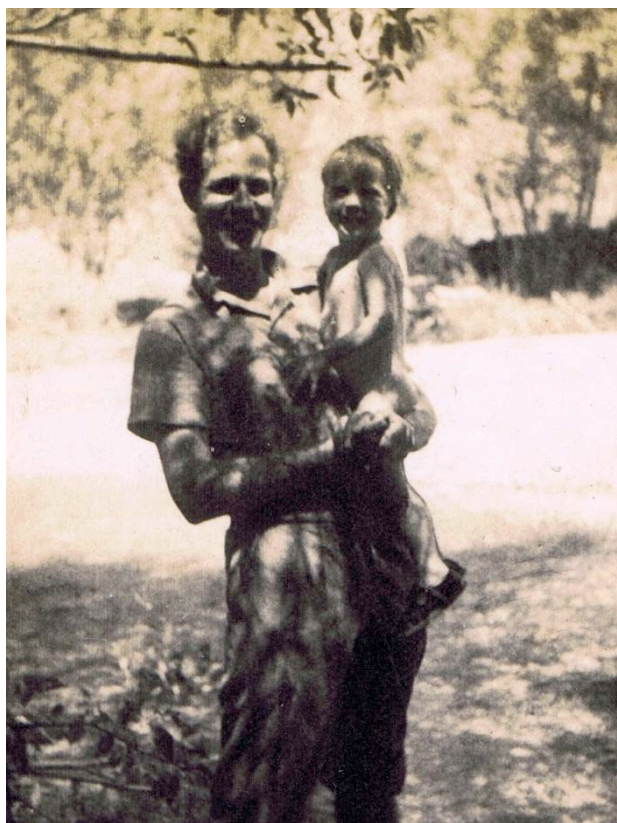














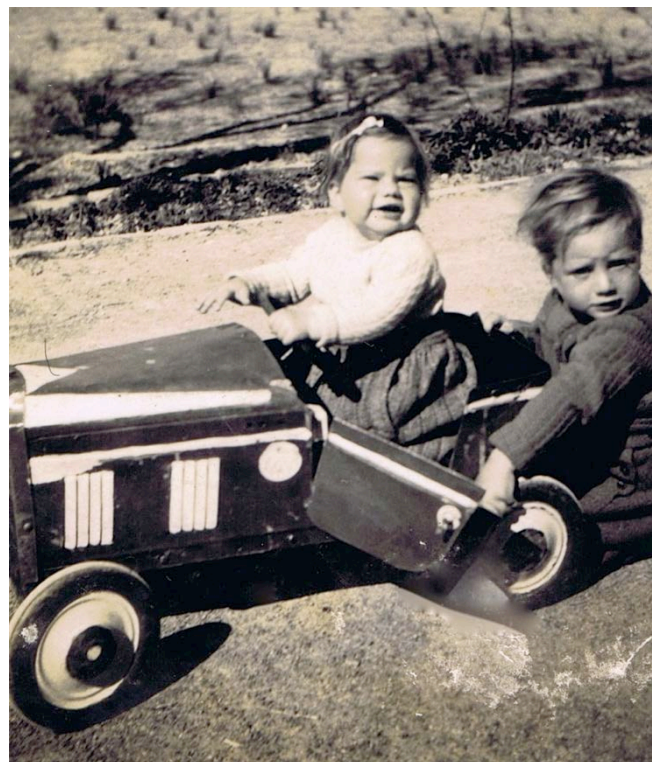


















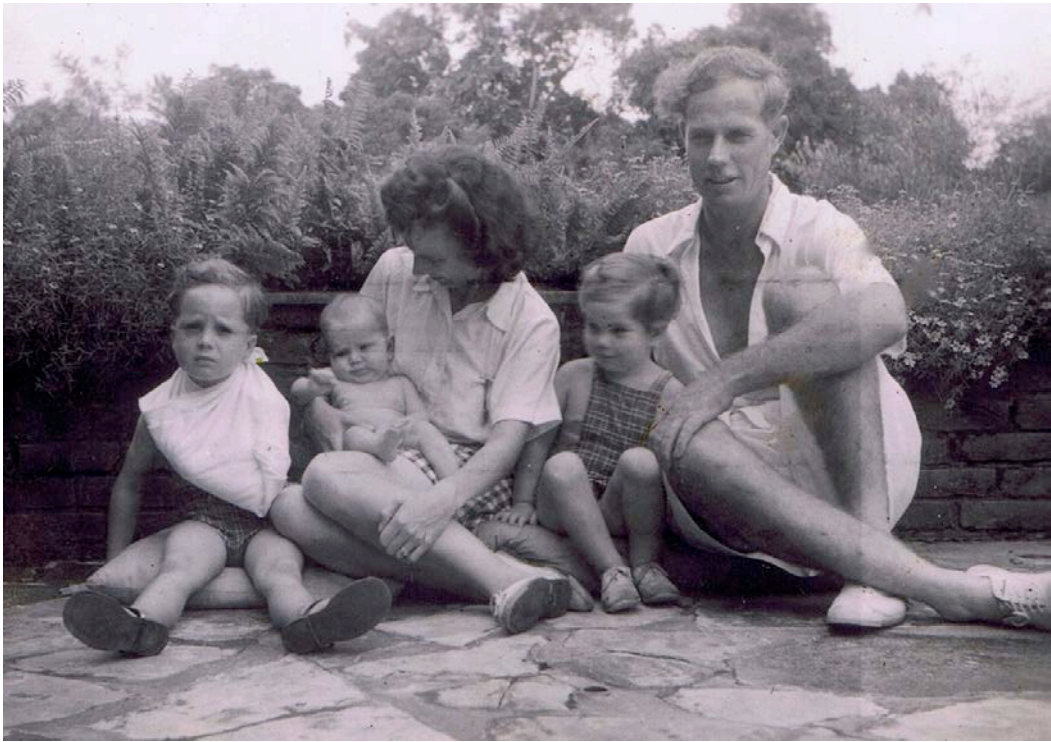












## 21 BACK IN ASSAM: September 1945 to July 1946

The war ended with the surrender of Japan on 15 August 1945. As yet I do not know how soon after that my mother, with Fiona and myself, re-joined my father, though it looks as if she went across Assam around about a month after. Here is her account of the last months in Assam. ('Daughters', p. 123)

So at last it was over, and I was in another train going back to Shillong, across the Sind desert, a stop in Calcutta, and then up through Bengal and over the Brahmaputra along with two children and a labrador puppy my mother had given me as a parting present. She had gone home, and my father was to follow a year later, their long commitment to India over. After my marriage my relationship with my mother was easier, I could busy myself with the children during the day and go partying at night without in any way disturbing her life; in fact, for the first time I was measuring up to the standards expected of me. She provided me with a home and solid support when I was ill; I nearly died of jaundice in Quetta and during that time she was a rock of comfort and practical help; she was always at her best when things became difficult.

Unexpectedly, I found myself an obsessive mother, and every waking moment of my children's day was spent amusing them. Alan had developed what was then known as acidosis and was frequently sick, and had two bouts of dysentery, so was a constant worry. Without my mother's help I don't know how I would have coped. I think I took all this for granted, saying thank you seems to have come hard for me all my life.

Back in a wooden hut in Happy Valley, I was soon pregnant again but no matter, the war was over, the dream had unbelievably come true. Mac was stationed in the plains but managed to get up for odd weekends. He had had a frustrating war from his point of view: the first battalion he raised went off to distinguish themselves at Kohima and he was left behind to raise another, but by that time the Japanese were in retreat and he only lingered on the fringes of action. He never spoke of the war afterwards, I think he felt faintly ashamed of his lack of having anything exciting to say.

Mac brought up a little pony for the children, and we sauntered across the parade ground in long domestic trails; children, horse, dog, ayah and my swelling self, choosing if possible a time when the colonel would be inspecting his men. Once we managed to do it when General Auchinleck was up on a visit, a masterpiece of timing. This effort at embarrassing the colonel was to repay him for putting my bungalow out of bounds to his officers, this being the holy misogynist who apparently saw me, bulbous as I was, as a biblical harlot. Fortunately, one of them ignored his orders and helped me get coal and gave me lifts into the shops in one of the fleet of army jeeps. Happy Valley was miles from anywhere and there were no buses.

My second daughter, Anne, was born in the hospital to which I had walked every afternoon across the field full of the smell of burnt corn; I never went back to visit my old landlady for reasons I now forget. Uncle Robert was still alive, so there was nothing to do but to go back to planting tea. We still talked about chucking it all in and getting that rose-covered cottage, but it was a bit like getting to be thirteen and finding my leg cured. Gradually, imperceptibly the dream thinned, faded and was gone. Instead there were to be twenty years of tea planting, and a repetition of all the long separations of our childhoods.

As I set off on yet another train journey, only a day this time, up the Brahmaputra valley newly planted with rice and steaming between monsoon showers, I felt nothing but relief at the thought of having a permanent home at last.

There are several letters to my grandmother from Iris, as follows:

The first is a typed letter written from Iris to her parents dated Sept 27 1945, from c/o Assam Regt, Happy Valley to Mrs Rhodes James, 25 St Margaret's Road. [typed]

Darling Mummy,

Thank you for your Air Letter which arrived yesterday. I expect you've got my airmail telling you of the journey. We're really almost organised now, though a lot of small things need doing, and the whole place could do with a coat of paint and some floor polish. But we aren't quite sure if we shall be staying on here or moving into our old hut, so I'm restraining myself. Our curtains have nearly all been eaten but are serviceable until anything else presents itself. Our entire dinner set was smashed alas, and we're eating off an extraordinary collection of crockery - I'm hoping Gwalior will start producing for general use again soon. But all round we have been lucky to have salvaged as much as we have. The luggage I brought with me from Quetta arrived intact, but on opening the box of children's books I was faced with a glutinous mass - we had packed a bottle of malt in with them and it had broken - a most depressing spectacle, but after a bit of sponging down the books emerged more or less intact.

This is really a very nice little hut, and Mac has fixed one of our lamps in the drawing room and another in my bedroom so that we're almost civilised. The end bedroom which Mac and I used to have is the children's and I sleep in the little middle room with the front one as a dressing room. The chief snag is the bathrooms or rather commodes which are filthy and as far as I can see irreplaceable. The children's potty is beginning to leak too and I can't get another so it's all rather slummy. They themselves are simply blooming and fatten as you look at them, and are very cheerful. We have a little pony for Alan which was brought out of Kohima with the battalion. It is a dear little thing and very quiet although quite untrained, Fiona loves it and has to be forcibly pulled from its back though Alan is a bit blasé and merely uses it as a conveyance. I'm hoping to collect a few chickens too, eggs being a major problem. Housekeeping is wildly expensive but one can get most things - except fresh butter, we eat tinned margarine and like it. I think things will improve when the Yanks clear out. I will send you some rice and marmalade each month, but I'm afraid sugar is still strictly rationed - we get 6lbs a month which goes nowhere and can't buy tins here either. I will send some Golden Syrup which we eat on porridge etc. if it isn't too heavy.

I will also send you some warm material for a dress and an odd tea cosy of ours - I'll send them to Daddy rather to take home. The few decent warm things I possessed were burnt when the Modern Cleaners caught fire just before I left Quetta so I haven't a stitch to wear this winter myself. I put Fiona's new white sweater on the other day as the Iliffs were coming to tea and when I turned round to dress Alan she got hold of my lipstick and was inches deep in it by the time I saw her - disastrous for the sweater, and we can't get it off though it doesn't stay on my face two minutes. My so-called Ayah doesn't appear very often, her baby always seems to be ill or something so I find myself pretty busy.

Mac got up last week-end and we took the kids for a picnic which reminded me of ones at home - food gulped down and stowed away quickly with one eye on huge black clouds overhead. It's still raining a lot and I'm still enjoying it. The Iliffs are off in a week back to tea. They are a quaint couple, they live on absolutely nothing and must

have amassed a quiet fortune. Both the children are hanging over me and making dives at the keys so I shall have to close down for a bit.

Shillong is full of traffic and uniforms but otherwise the same. Not nearly so many things in the shops as in Quetta though. We went to the club on Saturday and saw some of the same faces, including Dora – do you remember her? We are all allowed to go round in military trucks which is nice, and Mac hopes to be able to bring up a Jeep next time he comes.

I got a wedding invitation from Aileen which peeved me rather as now I suppose I shall have to send her a present. Also heard from Patricia Pettigrew telling of Teddy Stewards death, right at the end of the war – very sad. Patricia seems comfortable and has acquired a nurse from somewhere. I saw the arrival of a daughter for Sheila Kitson to-day. Noreens infant thrives and she is being very successful with its feeding this time. I think I shall probably have a crack at another during this hiatus in our hectic lives, so if you see the odd tin of Groats it will probably come in useful. Alan demands a brother. I have sacked my whole staff to-day and Abrar and I are going to cope, for the time being anyway. He is doing very well at the moment. I must write a line to Mac before the children wake for some of his b[attalion]. to take down to him this evening. Lots of love from us all,  
Iris

Letter from Iris to Violet, October 16<sup>th</sup> 1945 from Happy Valley [two airletters]

Darling Mummy,

Another Air Letter to thank you for – I hope you've got my Air Mail by now. Glad to hear A.M's [Aunt Margery] operation was a success. Life at home sounds very drab, and I'll try to send some food and am completely paralysed at the moment by not being able to get into Shillong or leave the children – it's a helpless feeling. I find being abandoned here very difficult, as nobody cares a damn about me and I can get no rations etc. We have no coke or coal in the house to-day, and as far as I can see will have to starve to-morrow! To add to my difficulty I've had Rs 140 pinched from my bag, but can't get hold of the police – not having a husband in this place, seems to cut one off completely. Actually its rather thoughtless of the Bn. here, but they seem a paralytic crowd all round.

In spite of all this we're all well, the children particularly, though Fiona is cross with more teeth cutting. Some tommies I met have made them a beautiful painted cart they can sit in, and various other small toys so they're pretty well amused. We took some snaps the other day which I hope come out, as its our last reel.

Alan is a very handsome little boy and at the stage of asking endless questions. He wanted to know where his food went to when he eat it, and when I told him demanded a looking glass to see it all happening! Fiona is sweet, but her hair still disappointingly straight.

You probably won't be surprised to hear I have started another infant. Almost on the dot of deciding as far as I can make out! It isn't due till the beginning of June (a reasonable time for a birthday, at last!) and we are both very pleased about it. I shall have it in the Welsh Mission as the Ganesh Das is in the charge of an Indian Lady Doctor now and nobody seems to go there – a pity, I should have liked to have it there. It all fits in quite well as I shall take the whole caboodle down to Tea in October. I've engaged a super super Ayah (at a super wage, Rs 70 plus rations!). She has been to England 3 times and has superlative chits, I feel she'll probably be too grand altogether, but am beginning to weary already of looking after both and will have to get one



eventually. I haven't thought about a trousseau, but if you have any baby wool, I'd love a couple of little coats like the ones you knitted Fiona. He will need very few warm clothes until he's over a year, so I don't think there's much to do. I've got all the dresses, blankets etc. from the other two, and also discovered the Maternity dresses I wore for Alan, so with luck he'll be an economical baby. I hope so as this place is ruinous. Alan is enchanted at the thought of a baby, and frequently says in a preoccupied way "No I must do my knitting" – he sits down with a piece of stick and some wool, making "socks for the baby in your tummy".

Mac hasn't been up much in the last three weeks, odd day, but I hope will get this week-end. He always brings toys or sweets, and is looked on as a sort of Father Christmas by the kids. I get completely ignored while he's here. The Iliffs have gone but there are still two children left who will be off very soon too. I am playing bridge this evening with some of the A.L.F.S.E.A. lads next door. I went last week in fear and trembling but ended by winning off the Colonel, so am more confident this time! Do hope you'll get your cottage soon, thing ought to be a lot easier in the country. Much love from us all, Iris.

Letter from Iris to Violet, December 3<sup>rd</sup> 1945, to 25 St Margaret's Road

Darling Mummy,

Thank you for your Air Letters of the 10<sup>th</sup>. I'm glad to hear you've got some help in the house at last and hope it lasts. I'd be most grateful for a couple of little coats and two sweaters of about 9 month size – I only have about 8 ozs baby wool which I was going to knit into jerseys for coming home for whichever needed them most – Fiona and the infant I think as Alan is still well set up by you! I spend all my time on socks now and never seem to have enough. It has suddenly turned cold and as usual I find myself with no warm clothes and unable to get into the ones I have but I shall hold out somehow as prices are still shocking. I've sent the material for you to Daddy and he seems hopeful of getting a boat at last so perhaps you'll get it for Christmas.

Would you buy a book for Robert for me – there is *nothing* out here. I owe Daddy some money and will add Rs 10 for that. We went into Shillong this morning to get presents for the children but it's all very make-shift and expensive. Mac hopes to get 10 days leave but what with Gandhis visit and the I.N.A. trials they're expecting trouble just at the wrong time and he may not make it. We shall be terribly disappointed as we've planned this Christmas in the certainty of spending it together. Mac has just been up for the week-end and brought a goose he had shot. I'm still feeling pretty sick and rather tired of it but should be over by Christmas and the Ayah is coping marvellously. The kids still thrive, Fiona is huge and growing more attractive daily – she reminds me distinctly of Belinda – the same black-fringed turned up blue eyes exactly! The snaps are disappointing but I'll send a couple of them Air Mail and write more fully then. My love to Billy if he's with you – I'll be writing again before Xmas so will save my greetings. Saw Mrs Macartney in the shops this morning!

Much love from us all, Iris

My mother left Assam on July 26th 1946 to go to Mohokutia Tea Estate to join my father, so there are seven months with no surviving letters (as yet).

**A poem for Anne**

*Petition for my daughter*

Time be kind. The dangerous world  
Presses on the petals furled,  
But as bruising years go by  
Promise her a sanctuary.

Let her grow with great surprise,  
Guard the wonder in her eyes  
For a shining sea-washed stone,  
For leaves of satin, twigs of bone.

Trust her with your mysteries,  
Butterflies and bark of trees.  
Woo her with your winds and grasses  
Comfort her when summer passes.

Give her body's flower grace  
Into Galahad's embrace,  
That in peace she may discover  
Man as friend and friend as lover.

Time be kind, be gentle. Teach her  
There are woods where naught can reach her,  
There are mornings none can borrow,  
Love enough for each tomorrow.

(Iris Macfarlane, originally written in the 1940's for Anne, her younger daughter, and remembered in about 2001. There is another, somewhat different version, in existence)

An earlier version copied into an unbound booklet

*Prayer for my daughter*

Time be kind. Do not deny  
Heartache from her destiny,  
But in all the world of hate  
Keep her dreams inviolate.

Let her grow in great surprise  
Guard the wonder in her eyes  
For shining sea-washed stone  
For a feather fairy-blown.

Trust her with your mysteries,  
Butterflies and barks of trees:  
Woo her with your winds & grasses:  
Comfort her when summer passes.

Give her body's flower grace

Into Galahad's embrace,  
That in peace she may discover  
Man as friend and friend as lover.

Time be kind, be gentle. Teach her  
There are woods where none may reach her  
There are mornings none can borrow,  
Love sufficient for to-morrow.

### **Richard's letters to his parents**

7th September 1945    c/o Lloyds Bank, Bombay

Darling Mummie,  
I don't know when you will get this ...  
I got a spate of letters in a short time ago, which made up for the long gap last months. One from Desmond & also from Billy, Iris & Daddie. Unfortunately Iris did not give me her address.  
My book is taking shape gradually & I have written almost half of it.

22nd September 1945

Darling Mummie,  
I am writing this letter from a bungalow in Kuala Lumpur, capital of the Federated Malay States: which of course may come as a mild surprise to you. [description of place and Japanese]

[similar letter to father, 25th September – even more detailed]

7<sup>th</sup> Oct 1945    G.S.I. H.Q. 34 Ind Corps    S.E.A.C.

Darling Mummy,  
... I have just had news from Daddy to say that Iris arrived safely at Shillong after an unusually comfortable journey from Quetta. The railways of India must be getting slowly back to normal again.  
I hope the house hunting is proceeding satisfactorily in a very house starved England. If Mary Macleish would give up her cottage it seems the problem would be solved.

6 Nov. 1945    Raffles Hotel, Singapore

Darling Mummie,  
... I managed to get a delightful little frock – an orange colour one in georgette – which I am sending to Iris for Fiona.

11 Nov    HQ 554 Sub Area.    Batavia [actually still in Singapore]

Dearest Billie,

I suppose you will now be tasting the rather austere delights of an English winter. Still the austerity is well worth for a sight of the old country. It is shabby, but its shabbiness is after all its own and quite unique.

12 December 1945 HQ 554 Sub Area S.E.A.C.

Darling Mummie...

On the subject of my career, I'm afraid the Civil Service is out. I have been chained to a desk sufficiently long in the Army to realise the utter boredom of such a life. Your other suggestion of schoolmastering has struck me as a very good one, and I am beginning to think seriously about it. Sedbergh would be a grand place to go back to, and I think the life would be ideal, with sufficient time and opportunity to practise one's own particular ideas, and a real vocation. I want to deal with people and not things...

5 Feb. 1946 HQ 554 Sub Area S.E.A.C. to Mrs. W.R. Rhodes James, 25 St Margarets Road, Oxford - crossed through and re-addressed to The Vicarage, Cumnor

Darling Mummie,

The great event has happened. Yesterday I received notification that my release had been approved by the Headquarters India Command subject to my willingness and availability... Several weeks will elapse before I finally set foot in England....

A most welcome letter arrived from Daddie giving the latest news from home. Of course this should have been addressed as a joint letter but I started it as I did through force of habit. He is rejoicing in England apparently despite the trials of the climate. I hop I will not find my enthusiasm for the old country too much damped by the cold weather. Anyway the welcome of a fire is worth the rigours.

I am writing to Christo regarding my aspirations as a schoolmaster, and I hope he has some good advice to offer. Is it true that he is going to retire? I hope to see something of Sedbergh when I get back. I am still wondering what exactly I will do when I get back to Oxford. I have forgotten the little history I did know & I will probably take some time to absorb anything after four years in the Army. ...

It is a small world. I met at a party a charming little Indian sister who was training at the Welsh Mission Hospital Shillong when Alan arrived. She is going back there on leave and I have asked her to look up Iris.

## 22 MOHOKUTIE TEA ESTATE, 1946-7

My mother left Shillong on July 26th 1946 to go to Mohokutie Tea Estate to join my father.

Description in 'Daughters of the Empire'

When I rounded the corner and saw the big, rambling bungalow perched on stilts, climbed over by flaming shrubs, many-doored, dark-roomed, huge, it was a relief. For me, though, there was less of disappointment and more of relief. I had a husband I loved and three children to occupy me so the isolation of the tea garden was not a great problem. I weighed six stone after my years in India and my many minor illnesses and one major one, and three births, and a lot of stressful wandering of the continent. Each hot day entirely engrossed me, and I only collapsed occasionally into a wicker chair on the verandah to watch the huge black hornets nesting in the greenery above. One sting would probably have killed a child, but it never occurred to us to disturb them, nor they us.

Looking back at the self that I then was, twenty four years old with seven years of India behind me and a great deal more in front, I find it hard to approve. I still knew nothing of the country outside the bungalow and club; had the barest command of its language; had shifted imperceptibly from my rigid white woman's stance in that I was beginning to feel a need to explore, but only on my own terms; had been original only in my rejection of the values of the army but even then with a response that was personal and trivial. I was still a Jones to my bigoted bones. Yet somewhere there must have been seeds of discontent lying, ready to sprout when the right rain fell on them. Now, from old age, I sometimes wonder if they would have been better left dry. Their stunted half-growth was failure and disappointment.

Wetness was the thing I remember about my first experience of Assam; the whole country was awash, and half the population seemed to be sitting on their roofs waiting for the floods to subside. Every year the monsoon rains washed away the bamboo bridge across the river that connected us with the club, sometimes carrying away the odd car or cow since there was no knowing the precise moment it would collapse. Then you had to cross in a dug out canoe, skillfully maneuvered over the foaming water by a very old man with a pole. Mac did this every week to play polo, but I was nervous, with a pair of toddlers and a suckling infant, and waited for the building of the new bridge which would signal the start of the social season.

While I waited I learnt things about tea planters that surprised and shocked me. We were "acting" as manager for a couple who had spent the war more or less unsupervised, and every empty space around the bungalow and below it in cavernous go-downs, was stashed with booty collected from the U.S. army; jeeps, fridges, tinned food, crates of whisky, you name it and they were ready to sell it to you for ten times its value. Their herd of cows was fed free, the milk from them skimmed and then sold back to the hospital. Manure was brought up in lorry loads to the vegetable garden, and the mountains of cabbages and tomatoes that resulted (tended by free labour) were also sold. Nothing in fact was paid for; servants, stores, kerosene, coal, they were all "written off" in ways that we had to follow while we were there. It was so easy to cheat on a tea garden that the word lost its meaning and it was considered quaint to use it. Yet we continued to watch our servants like hawks and count the cigarettes in their silver boxes before we went to bed.

Christmas was a bonanza, every handshake concealed a gold coin and we sat in the club comparing our presents: the silks and jewels, the farmyards of geese and ducks and goats

given us by contractors who hoped to get our custom. It wasn't bribery I was told, it was "dastur", habit, custom, the whole of India was run on it and it was not for us to interfere. So I stifled my conscience, and when we went on leave I took the gold coins to money changers in Calcutta who sat behind bars in the bazaar and tested them between their teeth before handing me a wad of notes. Some people melted the gold and made it into jewellery instead.

The club, when I could get to it, was a small wooden building with a pale green field in front - the polo Ground - and three tennis courts at one side. It was provided inside with scratched bamboo chairs along the walls, and two bars, one for men only. There was nothing for the children to do, no swings or sandpits, not even a tree to climb. After the games were played by the adults, the men retired to the billiard room and their private bar, and the women sat in a circle and talked about their servants. The children sagged on my lap, pale and hungry, and we were all of us too tired to be nervous of Mac's erratic driving over the creaking bamboo bridge on the way home. But I still lived in the present. I don't remember thinking, "This is how I shall be spending my leisure hours for the next twenty years".

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The letter of 16th August 1946 is from Mohokutie Tea Estate and describes her arrival there, though Mac had obviously been there earlier.

Letter from Iris to Violet, 16.8.1946 Mohokutie T.E. India - to the Vicarage, Cunnor (typed)

Darling Mummy,

I have two letters to thank you for, as you probably knew I couldn't write myself due to the postal strike and have just got the mail which has accumulated for the last three weeks. As you see we are now safely on the tea garden after two false starts, the second one due to floods. I got Mac's wire putting me off just as we were starting off with our luggage - the whole district was under water, half our compound included. I eventually left on the 26<sup>th</sup> July and had a pretty grisly journey, though short. We had to leave Shillong at 4 a.m. to catch the Assam Mail and the only way we could make it was in a 15 cwt lorry - not the most comfortable way to do a 4 hour hill road, but the kids slept a bit of the way and were very good. We arrived at Padu just as the train was leaving and only had time to hurl ourselves and our 60 mds [maunds] or so of luggage into a small coupe before it started. Of course we chose the one carriage without a fan so you can imagine what it was like with all the windows blocked by trunks, tricycles etc and five of us inside! Anne screamed without ceasing just to complete the general enjoyment. We arrived at 7.30 p.m. and had another 1 hours lorry trip before we got here so were all pretty dead and Alan was sick on arrival, excitement I think. Anne continued to scream till after midnight and we began to feel desperate but quietened her with a couple of bottles in rapid succession and she has hardly opened her mouth since.

This is an incredible place, the size of a small hotel at least and every modern convenience. There are four suites with tiled bathrooms attached, two sitting rooms (one the size of a ballroom) dining room and a verandah all round that is the size of the bungalow again. Everything is clean and mosquito proofed, the cook-house is on the same scale as the bungalow and there's a lovely compound attached full of flowering shrubs and trees and a mass of incredible butterflies of every colour, some the size of small birds. I did not know people lived in such luxury any where nowadays, and



apparently this is not an exception as far as bungalows go, but the rule. The heat is not nearly as bad as I expected, it doesn't compare with the U.P. hot weather or even Quetta in my opinion.

We stay in and around the bungalow from 10 a.m. till after tea and then usually splash about in a small cement pond at the bottom of the garden which we have cleaned out for the children. They are both very fit and eat hugely specially Alan who is shooting up. Fiona being the fattest is troubled a little with prickly heat and has developed a few small boils on her forehead, but doesn't worry about either. I've weaned Anne completely and feel much better for it, and she is doing well on Ostermilk. She now weighs nearly 12 lbs and is a model baby, sleeps and plays all day and is very pink and blue-eyed. I hope we'll get some snaps of her to send, but we don't seem very successful with the camera nowadays.

We have hundreds of servants milling round us here each getting about Rs 15 a month. I've had a difference of opinion with my old Ayah and am sending her back to Shillong at the end of the month. She has been very much the grand lady since we got down and now wants me to provide most of her food on top of the Rs 70 a month I give her but I've struck at that. We have a nice little coolie girl who amuses the children and will manage with her until we can find another.

We've just bought a car for 1500 and Mac is having great fun taking it to pieces and I hope will manage to put it together again one of these days (that and our Frig. has exhausted our Gratuity but both were essential we felt). By the way the General Manager says we can apply for passages next March so I think its pretty definite we'll be home about then. We are thrilled at the thought and have great plans so I hope were not disappointed. We want to try and get a couple of weeks at the sea if possible, is there any hope of Cornwall do you think? We would like to make our base with you and dump Anne permanently, but she's going to be a bit of a tie, what hopes of a temporary nurse? Even for a month or so would help. I feel these things should be thought of months ahead with the present shortage. I suppose there's not a hope of that cottage at St Agnes? We cant really believe its going to happen, we've been planning it so long.

Your birthday parcel has just arrived with the books for me and the kids - thank you so much. Mac has swiped my book and hardly emerged from it for the past 24 hours so I feel it must be interesting! Alan of course was thrilled to find something for him in the parcel, in fact it saved a critical situation arising as he always feels ever parcel must be his. I've written off to Alan Cowan, the Farex I will save for the journey as Groats is coming onto the market again. Please don't spend your precious coupons on wool for the children, or at any rate tell me how much you've used so that I can try to replace it. I've embarked on Macs sweater at last and feel it will take me till March at lest but must try to fit in some socks and oddments for the children too.

Much love from us all - Iris

Letter from Iris to Violet, October 30<sup>th</sup> 1946, from Mohokutie T.E. [typed] to Mrs Rhodes James, The Vicarage, Cumnor

Darling Mummy,

Two of your Airgraphs have managed to evade the latest floods and killings, and another arrived to day, all most welcome. We are waiting on tenterhooks to hear that Aunt Margery has finally taken off, we shant be happy about the house till we know she has finally landed on Gwalior lake! Tell her that there is no difficulty about cloths out

here and she can fit herself with a complete trousseau on arrival if that's what she is worrying about - more or less true. While on the subject, we were amazed to see the whole story of Leigh splashed across the front of the Daily Mirror the other day. Uncle Roy saying "My son my only son" with a break in his voice etc. I wouldn't have thought it of him to give interviews to such a rag, poor Granny, I hope she never saw it. His whole case reminds me very much of that book "Oh Absalom" did you read it - the spoilt child who ends up as a murderer, though I trust Leigh will refrain from that.

We have heard no more about our passage but it still stands at February or March. The cars you mention are certainly a staggering price, but we feel we must have one and are trying to save a little now. We have just bought one out here for Rs. 1500 but are still trying to collect the pieces we have sent to be repaired. We can sell that if the worst comes to the worst. We will let you know definitely a bit nearer the time. If you can find a cheap second hand pram I would like it, but if not I will try and collect one in Calcutta on my way through. There are stacks of things arriving out here now, but of course we never see them here, and the postal system is so erratic nowadays we often get no letters or papers for a week at a time. I'm trying to collect clothes for coming home by sending stuff to Calcutta to be made up, but god knows if I'll ever see it back or in what condition. All the riots seem to take place round the stations and trains run any time or not at all. I hope things have improved before we travel. Let me know well in advance anything you would particularly like me to bring home in the way of clothes for yourself or Robert and I'll see what I can do. I believe you have to give coupons for anything new so don't expect too much!

We are all fit, and I have got an Ayah at last, the Khasi girl who was my second Ayah in Shillong. She is a very nice little thing and I hope she stays as it makes all the difference having someone to do all the endless chores. I'm now trying to put on weight, I have been losing steadily since Anne arrived and am down to 7 stone 4 lbs in clothes and shoes, Mac thinks you will blame him and is feeding me on Virol and cream which I don't object to! The family are fit, and Alan's arm is practically normal. Anne is fit and cheerful, and I enclose a photograph of her taken at 3 ½ months. We took a couple more which we have sent to Mac's people and will send you copies when we get them, she is finally onto cows milk via Ostermilk and Cow and Gate and is doing well but refuses to finish any bottle. She doesn't seem to suffer though. She can get right up onto her knees now and will be crawling in no time. I presume I can get Baby foods for her when I get back: there is a little Groats in the market now which I will try and collect otherwise.

We have sent off two Xmas parcels, one to you and one to Granny as you will presumably be in the same house, and a regular order of sweets lard and curry powder (I remember afterwards that you couldn't get rice so this may not be a success, let me know). I would send more but the things are a wicked price, 7.8 for a lb of tea etc. a sheer ramp really. We have sent from two different firms in the hopes that one of them will be honest anyway. I don't think we'll find the food difficult when we get back, we live chiefly on goat and tinned herrings here, though of course we get eggs milk and fresh fruit which are the most essential things. We had a couple of lads to stay last week end, ex Assam Regt., and they ate up most of our weeks rations - the bazar here is pure blackmail, they won't kill a cow at all unless the cook pays their price, beef is Rs. 3 a seer irrespective of whether its meat or bone ...(damaged)... the earth to feed and is ....

The cold weather does seem to be beginning at last, the days are still hot but we sleep under a blanket at night. We're having a lot of fun with our vegetable garden, and trying to hurry it on so that we'll eat the odd carrot before we leave. Caterpillars are doing their best to ruin it.

A mob has descended on the typewriter so I'd better stop and get this off. Mac's sister is thinking of taking a Spanish degree at Oxford so the whole clan will be gathering there soon!

Much love from us all, Iris

\*

There is an account account in 'Going Back', but it is clearly a mixture of fiction and fact, though it does have lively vignettes of life on the garden, Alan with dysentery etc. etc. But it is difficult to tell fact from fiction and the order of events has been changed. It does contain a very moving account of the near-death of 'William (Alan) from dysentery, but it is difficult to know how true this is to life. Possibly use bits later. Here is just the start of it:

The account in 'Going Back' (p.223) is different - implying that Mac left the army in 1944?

'By the time Jess [Fiona - April 1944] was born, Doug was back on the Tea Garden. He had become thoroughly fed up with his war effort. The 1st Bn. had gone off into action without him, and he had been left to raise a 2nd. This, though in some ways a complement, was not what he had joined up for. Also there was a new C.O. even worse than the last; so that when Doug heard that the Tea Companies were desperately needing Managers back he asked for leave to return. Rather to his surprise it was granted. With the Battle of Kohima won [April 1944] it was safe for Maria to join him. With so many Europeans absent, Doug found himself Manager of a large garden, with a bungalow to match. Maria was astonished by the size of it; acres of wooden floors and white washed walls, long verandahs with coconut matting stretching round them; and around the whole lot gardens and lawns, orchards of bananas, lemons, oranges, papayas and mangos; stables and cowhouses and a complex of thatched outhouses for the servants....

In June 1946 my sister Anne was born and on 16<sup>th</sup> August we moved to Mohokutie Tea Estate in the Assam valley. There we remained for some eight months before all leaving for England in March 1947. My parents were going home for a leave, but it was planned to leave one or two of us there.

At this point my parents had moved together to their first civilian home, the Mohukutie tea garden described in my mother's autobiography.

*We stay in and around the bungalow from 10 a.m. till after tea and then usually splash about in a small cement pond at the bottom of the garden which we have cleaned out for the children. They are both very fit and eat hugely specially Alan who is shooting up ... We have a nice little coolie girl who amuses the children and will manage with her until we can find another.*

There are a few further photographs from this period, but no more letters.

\*

The only other relevant evidence I now have of the preparations for our return is a letter from my grandmother Violet's sister Margery's husband, then in India, to my grandfather, about the letting and sub-letting of the house in Oxford and the rent. 'Uncle Roy' as we knew him, wrote on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1947 from the Residency P.O. Gwalior, a few weeks before we arrived at Oxford, as follows.

*My dear Will,*

*Many thanks for your letter. I expect the clouds will blow away with the season. I have already agreed that the rent should be three and a half gns. a week. Please do not pay more than that. The rent I pay is £95 per annum. Rates are £34-8. That leaves approx £1 a month for fair wear and tear of furniture and decorations, which should be adequate. I have no desire to make any money out of friends but only do not wish to be out of pocket.*

*As regards the lavatory basin, Margery suggests that you endeavour to get a builder to mend it with porcelain cement which she has known to be successful in another case. If this is not possible, please have the basin replaced at our expense, but it is important that the new basin should be a small one owing to limited space.*

He also mentioned that Aunt Margery was in India, and might return in September, which may coincide roughly with the time when we left the house.